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IMAGINE™

Adventure Games Magazine

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GHOSTS!

We look right through them

CARL CRITCHLOW '83

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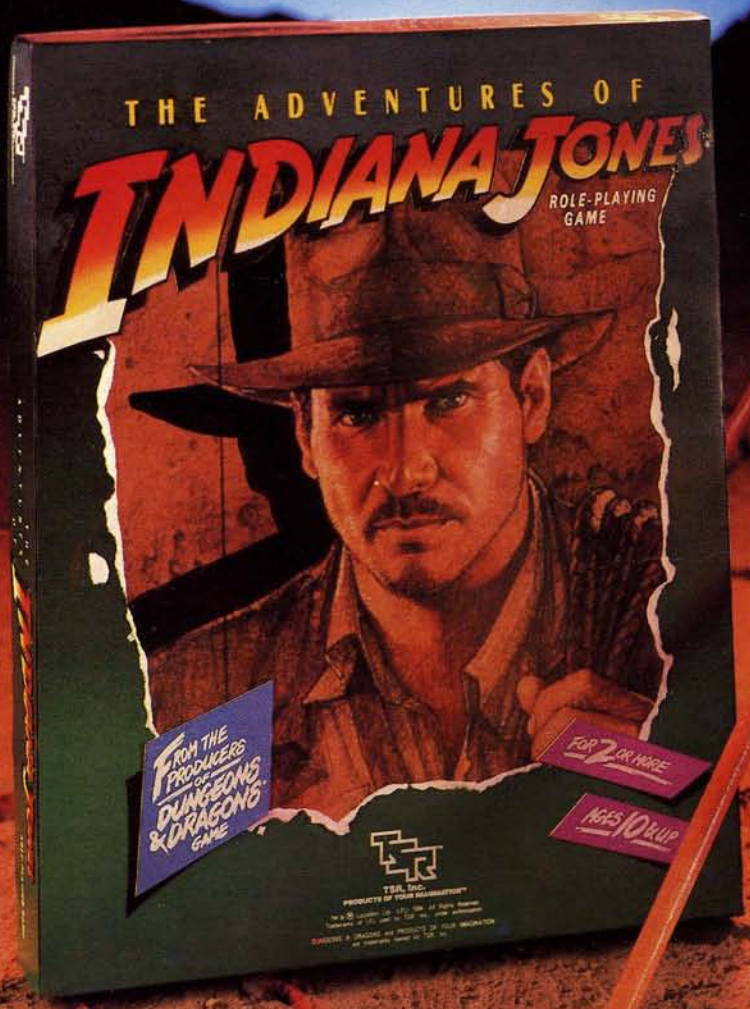

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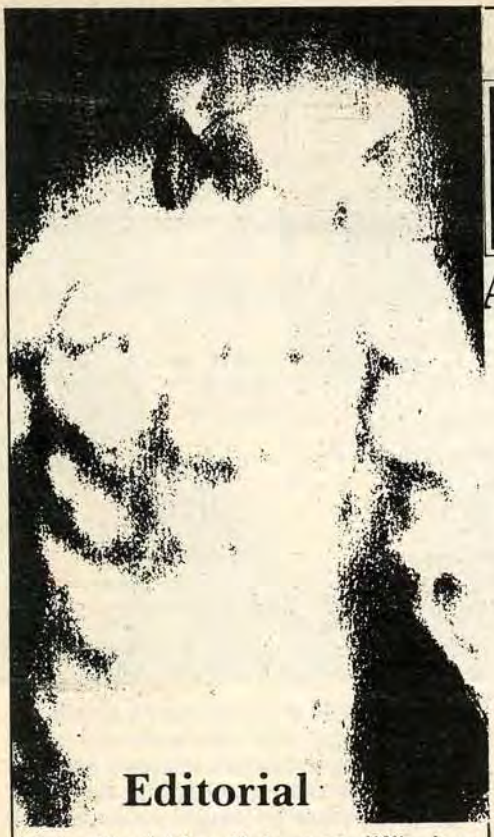

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Editorial

This editorial is a little more difficult to write than normal, since we appear to be buried in Readers' Poll forms. Fascinating stuff — thanks to all of you who took the time to let us know what you think of our 'umble publication.

The results of your votes will be released in some form or another next month, but here is a sneak preview, based on the first hundred or so forms. It looks like most of you make use of the scenarios we publish, particularly those for the D&D and AD&D games; **Sinvel's Peril**, **Darklaw**, **The Fire Opal of Set**, **Sethotep** and **Jack of All Trades** are scoring heavily as favourites. Many have commented on how they prefer the Brief Encounter format for introducing new monsters and what-have-you, and **Pelinore** has proved a winner with a great many readers.

Not everything has won your approbation, and there might be a few changes quite soon. A certain resident of Moggedon will probably be calling personally to discuss certain people's votes, and to the person who said rude things about the letters page — don't mind the black stuff dripping off the badge pin....

Some of you with long memories kept going on about this **Sword of Alabron** thing. Now I don't want it ever to be said that we don't listen to our readers, so action is being taken right away.... If we can just find where we put Ian Williamson's address....

Paul Cockburn

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..... News **Doug Cowie** .....
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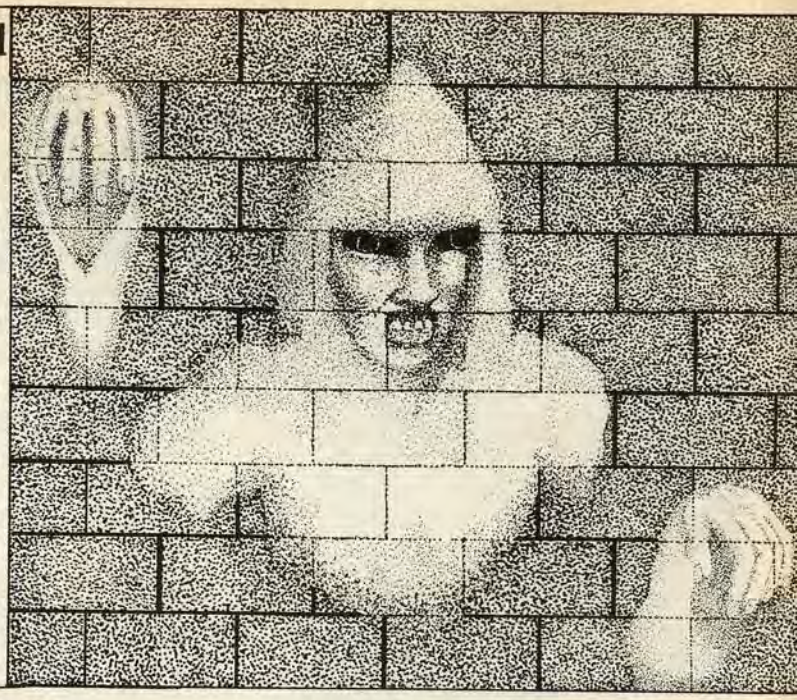
Looking through the spirit world

Ghosts

by Chris Barlow



A New Life for Ghosts

The **Monster Manual** — with its picture of a grave-stalking hooded figure — embodies the Halloween image of a ghost, the picture evoked by someone putting a sheet over their head. Yet ghosts, described in the text as 'non-corporeal spirits of evil humans', have traditionally been a far more varied phenomena. In British folklore, this is particularly true, and using the numerous stories that exist, a great deal can be done to enhance the life of a ghost.

Following the guidelines of this article, seven monsters from the rule books can be classed as 'ghosts', if they are compared to the ghost stories prevalent in this country's literature. These are spectres, groaning spirits, apparitions, poltergeists, phantoms, haunts and of course, ghosts themselves. In all of the general passages, the seven can be considered as a group, generically known as ghosts. Where necessary, I shall indicate where I am talking about just one variety.

A Wildlife Reserve

There are ghosts the world over but for this article only those of this country have been considered. Britain has been described as a supernatural wildlife reserve. It has a population of ghosts exceeding 10,000 — considered to be more than a quarter of the world's population — many of which are extremely ancient. There are various reasons: the absence of major strife for more than 1,000 years; the gradual evolution of new folk traditions, allowing the old tales to continue; the early blend of several races and the large number of ancient stone sites — castles, churches, circles and the like — which still survive (stone is considered by some to be capable of trapping particular images, especially those generated by stress; compare the spell **stonetell**). The result is a wide range of possibilities for the DM to select from.

Real Life Ghosts

Like that of the ghost, the pictures of the spectre and the groaning spirit create an impression of an insubstantial monster, while the phantom and the haunt are described as translucent. Yet not all ghosts are insubstantial. A great many (possibly the majority) have been described as though they were real. Usually, some peculiarity marked them as different — their way of dress perhaps. Not until they vanished of their own accord or the viewer tried to touch them was the illusion of reality destroyed. How was this illusion created? If one reads enough ghost stories then several ways stand out by which the DM can describe such an appearance.

SUBSTANCE: The DM should either describe some ghosts as if they were solid creatures — even in daylight — or create a setting around an insubstantial ghost which disguises the fact; a dark room for instance. Or a translucent ghost can be set against a plain drab background and made more solid by the addition of colour.

COLOUR: Nearly all ghosts possess colour, be it dark hair, fair skin, or the colour of their boots. Often they have a prominently coloured feature which is remembered and later related by those who see it; for instance, the bright red lips of a (dead) woman who bent over to kiss a sleeper. In one story, a woman who wears a grey Elizabethan dress is known as the Grey Lady, and there are also White, Blue, Red, Brown and Yellow Ladies (and Men) as well. All these are named after some prominent item of clothing — a cape, a dress, or sometimes just a piece of material. Other ghosts appear 'white', as if 'close to death', whilst a tavern called the Black Boy is reputedly haunted by a small West Indian child.

FORM: Ghosts encountered in adventures are nearly always human, with a few elves as groaning spirits. Occasionally a giant might creep in, but ghost stories about dwarves, gnomes, halflings and so on are noticeably absent in folklore. Whether the DM includes these is a personal choice. Either way, ghosts (including groaning spirits) come in many other forms.

Sometimes only part of a human body is seen. The many examples include a black, sinewy and hairy hand or a disembodied head, floating or resting on an object, whispering forecasts of doom. If necessary, the DM should invent a story to explain the dismemberment.

Animal ghosts abound. The creatures either appear as pets accompanying the ghosts of someone else (normally the owner) or they appear in their own right. Dogs, cats and horses are all relatively common. Others include bears, water creatures and birds.

Nor is the variety of form restricted to once living creatures. Tales exist of ships, trains, vans, carriages and many other vehicles. People have been invited into cottages, sat down and talked to the occupier, only to find out later that not only had the occupier been long since dead, but the house had been demolished as well. There are tales of houses which appear to be aflame, of wild storms which lash the outsides of buildings, terrifying those within. In the cold light of day, it was found that neither fire nor storm existed. Other ghosts which are not accredited with any form of their own are often centred on something. A skull is common. Taken together, ghosts come in many forms.

APPEARANCE: Emotion is often associated with ghosts. Several have been seen who are sad. Other emotions displayed include fear, distress, sorrow and rage. The DM need suffer no restriction when dealing with the 'mood' of a ghost.

SOUND: Has a ghost ever spoken to one of your adventurers? There are many accounts of ghosts who have spoken with

people, although others seem incapable of speech. Sometimes an appearance is made in absolute silence. At other times, for equally unknown reasons, armour may clank and footsteps fall heavily on the floor.

Ghostly sounds can also occur quite separately from a visual sighting (or precede an appearance). The eerie whistling in a dark corridor will be something that many adventurers will have heard. Other ideas are creaking chains, the braying of horses, or voices in an area known to be devoid of life. There are many examples.

SMELL: Like sound, smell either accompanies, precedes or occurs entirely separately from a visual sighting of a ghost. Sometimes the smells linger long after the ghost has gone. Scents are reported very commonly, either those of the countryside — a warm midsummer's evening for instance — or perfume, associated with a female ghost. The stench of rotting flesh and the smell of blood are darker possibilities.

ACTIONS: Ghosts are rarely encountered 'doing anything'. The groaning spirit appears, the ghost walks through a wall and the spectre is often found sitting by the fireplace. There are stories of ghosts which materialise out of nothing, usually as the observer enters a particular place. When active, they are normally doing something quite natural, like eating, saddle-making, or purposefully walking up or down the stairs. Their actions depend largely on the reasons they now roam the land in their present state. Is it vengeance? Or, like the haunt, some unfinished task?

All the above considerations can be given to the seven types of ghost listed. In addition, there are several comments which relate specifically to particular types.

GROANING SPIRITS: Quite a large body of tales relates to ghosts whose appearance either heralds the death of somebody in a particular family, or is reputed to cause the death of those who hear the sound they create. Such ghosts are obviously akin to groaning spirits. Examples include a drummer boy whose drum beats foretell death, an eerie whistling which seems to come from some diatant room, the barking of dogs, or the cry of a white bird as it soars through the sky.

Obviously, the DM musts decide whether to include such non-Elvish groaning spirits in the campaign.

PHANTOMS: Instead of visual images either sound or smell can be used (on its own) as a phantom. The smells could be strong and overpowering, resulting in nausea unless a saving throw is made. The sounds could be so loud that they cause deafness. Alternatively they could be used as 'red herrings' in an adventure. As with phantom images, the sounds and smells may be exorcised but not turned.

HAUNTS: These are ghosts of people who have died leaving some task unfinished. There are also several ghosts of people who have died and left some possession 'hidden'. The circumstances in which the item was left is often accidental but sometimes there can be sinister reasons — possibly the item was stolen from somebody and the thief had cached the ill-gotten gains, only to die before being able to recover them. Such ghosts are akin to haunts.

In such cases it is wrong to assume automatically that the ghost will be found frantically trying to complete the unfinished task or find whatever was hidden, being unable to rest in peace until this is done. They may be encountered in other more subtle ways. One story tells of a man who was passed in the street by someone he knew and was asked to tell his daughter that some item was 'on the top shelf'. The man dutifully did as he was bid and the daughter looked where instructed and exclaimed that it was. Only later did the man find out that the man he knew, the girl's father, had died the week before.

APPARITIONS: A markedly different temperature — either intense cold or searing heat — often accompanies the sensation of strangling so common in the presence of an apparition. Individual parts of human bodies make excellent substitutes for the skeletal form commonly associated with these monsters.

POLTERGEISTS: A poltergeist is described as an invisible ghost capable of causing objects to move. However, if a spell caster uses **see invisible** the DM must provide a description! Of course, the considerations applied to some of the other forms of ghost can be used when formulating such a description. Alternatively — and especially if the DM is unprepared for the casting of the spell — the description may be centred on an object, not necessarily even in view. Skeletons — the remains of people maliciously murdered and subsequently buried without a religious ceremony — are a good standby. Skulls are another.

Another way to deal with revealed poltergeists might be for the DM to say that it looks like any other type of ghost. This system works best if it is adapted for all types, so that the party only receives further information through observing the actions of the ghost. The mere sight may induce fear and possibly unnatural ageing. Taking all the above thoughts into account, the DM will be able to create a more varied selection of ghosts, adding to the uncertainties at each encounter. Insubstantial, colourless, odourless, silent ghosts which appear to do nothing have been reported; the DM will find ways to stretch out the atmosphere of danger with entirely harmless spirits. It is because such appearances are the exception rather than the rule that they stand out.

If the DM introduces the idea that a real life ghost will not necessarily be recognised as such, the party should be given some opportunity to realise that all is not what it seems. They could recognise something as being incongruous. The most common clue is when a ghost is out of date or out of place. A monk in an inn (built on the site of a monastery) for instance; sounds of a battle being fought when the land is at peace; clothing which is out of fashion. If such signs are recognised the party may realise that what they can see is unreal. With some ghosts it may be impossible to tell....

Haunting by Numbers

Unlike most monsters, ghosts neither eat nor sleep. They can be encountered in all conditions from polar icecaps to desert. Nor does there need to be any obvious reason for their existence (although in a campaign the DM should ensure that the adventurers can track back the origins of most ghosts that they encounter). This being the case, how many of such an 'ideal monster' (from the DM's point of view) could reasonably be found in a single dungeon adventure?

Any number at all, although it is better if the DM associates the number of ghosts to some rational explanation, such as the location of the adventure. What is the site's age? The older it is the longer it will have had to acquire ghosts. Is there any stone present? As mentioned earlier, this is considered capable of recording images — that is, phantoms. What has been the nature of the people who have lived in and around the site? Lastly, what are the reasons for the individual ghosts' existence?

Glamis castle is reputedly haunted by several ghosts. There is a tall figure dressed in silvery armour who walks around bedrooms peering at sleeping guests. A lord who was a notorious gambler can now be heard cursing aloud

with his companions, while dice rattle on a board. A tall man dressed in a black cloak passes through walls. There is a bearded figure thought to be responsible for crashing noises; a butler who hanged himself; a sorrowful White or Grey Lady, normally found, kneeling in the chapel; even a runner, who is seen jogging in the grounds.

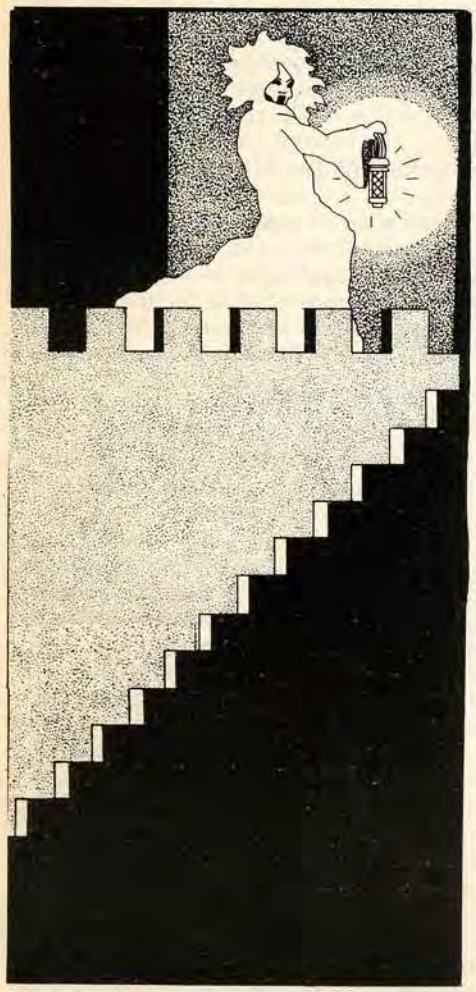
A few other buildings (castles in particular) have more than a dozen ghosts, and a sizeable number have three or four. The majority have just the one.

The Birth of a Ghost

There are many circumstances which can result in the creation of a ghost. Only a sample can be given. Some of the more frequent are:

EARLY DEATH: This is a common cause of ghosts. As a general rule, the ghosts return for a length of time equal to that which they would have lived. Particularly strong emotions connected to a premature death may prolong the return; possibly even for an indefinite period (the country's oldest ghosts date back to the Romans and the Druids before them).

Specific causes of early death include murder, mistreatment and wrongful execution. The victims return to haunt their tormentors; vengeance is often their aim. Another kind of early death leads to a much more tragic kind of ghost. A suicide might discover that death is not a release.



Natural disasters, such as a coastal village drowned by the breaking of a dam, can lead to cases where the inhabitants are reputed to carry on as normal. The sound of ghostly bells ringing beneath the waves is sometimes attributed to this cause.

PUNISHMENT: Those who have caused the sufferings of others, through negligence or forgetfulness, may find that their ghost returns to watch over the living. When a sufficient 'penance' has accrued their time of punishment ends. Such ghosts are often from a religious background, but others can include murderers — perhaps condemned to right the wrongs of others as part of their eternal punishment.

JEALOUSY: Although often connected with murder, jealousy can be reason enough for a ghost to occur. For example, there is a story of a widower who decided not to court the village maidens after he saw his wife glowering at him. She had been buried only that morning.

WARNINGS: Those who have done something they regret sometimes return to warn others. In this regard, they are like the ghosts of suicides, trying to reduce the effects of their error. Similarly, there are ghosts of those who died before they could pass on a warning to those they loved or were responsible for. A common tale is of dead relatives who haunt their living kin, attempting to warn them of some impending doom. Other ghosts 'guard' over dangerous places with which they are often associated; a small minority stand guard over ill-gotten treasure....

CURSES: If a curse is placed upon a family and a ghost results, the ghost that appears is frequently an omen of death. Alternatively, the ghosts that occur may 'remind' people of the events which took place.

IMPROPER BURIAL: In some ways, this category can be classed with the other reason which gives rise to a haunt — the motivation of unfinished tasks. It is, however, a strong enough reason for ghosts more powerful than a haunt to result. The single-minded aim of the ghost is the proper burial of its dead body.

Campaign Ghosts

Before concluding, I'd like to offer a few words about how ghosts may be used in a long term campaign. Unlike in single adventures, hauntings which take place over a period of time can be included. Often these will build up to a peak, becoming more and more vicious — only subsiding when the occupants of the house, or whatever the centre of the ghost's activity is, move away. Other hauntings will occur periodically — every year or so. Then there are the omens which herald somebody's death. These can be used if your campaign includes several families of NPCs. Begin to make a record of things which happen — foul deeds committed by adventurers, for example — and resurrect them at a later date as a haunting.

Consequences

In addition to the greater variety that will result, these changes of playing style can have several other consequences.

Perhaps the most serious comes when the ideas are applied to spectres or ghosts, both of which cause harm by touch. The DM should take this into account in the dungeon design. Consider including one of the alternative ways by which a ghost may be recognised if the intended party will not be powerful enough to face a seemingly normal ghost that proves to be more powerful.

Also, 'friendly', non-evil ghosts may now be introduced down a dungeon. If they look normal (and, as a consequence, the party do not age 10 years and run away!), the spirit of a dead person whom the party recognises may be introduced to the story. They might meet a fellow adventurer who died on a previous trip down the same dungeon, or a little old man with a message. A ghost may be the result of the casting of **contact other planes**, or it may appear for no reason at all. It could just be lonely!

There are a few tales of ghosts which cause fear. Introducing these into an encounter can change the entire atmosphere of the place, charging it with dread. It is even possible that the person involved will never even see the ghost, but will flee in terror. The DM should be aware that, where a ghost has been introduced which has the power to create fear in party members, it is the recognition of the ghost for what it is that causes the fear.

Therefore, if a party cannot recognise a ghost for what it is, they need not suffer any adverse effects. They may suffer later, of course, when the 'person' gets up and glides across the floor towards them! The DM should take the recognition factor into account whenever these powerful adversaries are introduced.

All of the above suggestions are intended to provide an alternative way for the DM to incorporate ghosts into a campaign, creating new challenges without creating new monsters. A keen DM can find plenty of additional information — there are numerous ghost tales to draw on. In this article, the more useful and most well-known 'facts' about ghosts have been incorporated into the idea — but what party is going to be happy facing up to something of such variety, when the DM tells them only that they can see a ghost!

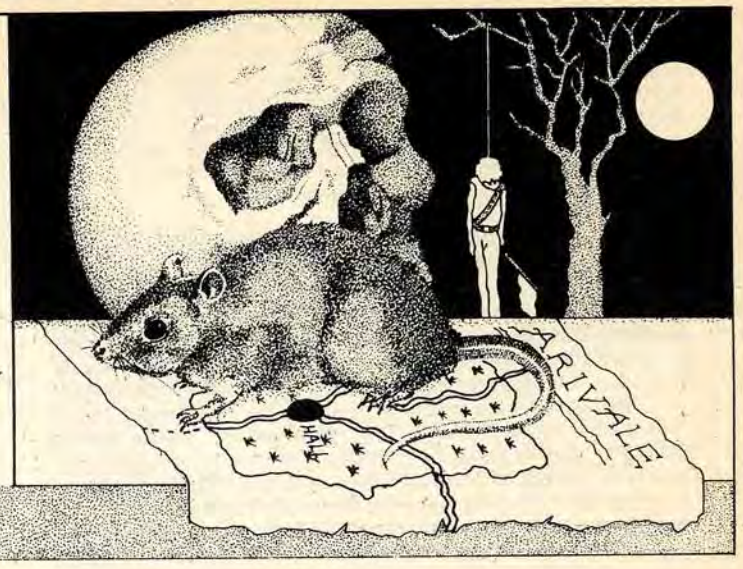
The adventure on the succeeding pages is designed to introduce a few new ghostly ideas to DMs. If you give it a try, bear a few of the ideas in this article in mind, and keep the party guessing. By the time the adventure is over, most characters will have learned a healthy new respect for the spirit world.

Chris Barlow

A ghostly Brief Encounter set against the backdrop of a bitter family feud

The CURSE of ARIVALE

by CHRIS BARLOW



The Curse of Arivale is a Brief Encounter for the AD&D® game, designed for 4-7 characters of 5th-8th level. The DM must take particular care over the level of any cleric(s) in the party, since a high-level cleric could probably take on the adventure with a few low-level fighters. **If you intend to play in this adventure, please stop reading here. The rest of the information is for your Dungeon Master only.**

Most of the conventions normally followed in full IMAGINE™ magazine modules are adhered to in this scenario. The stats for all encountered creatures named in the text are collected at the back of this scenario; additional encounters can be added if the DM requires. The Curse of Arivale will convert to the D&D® game, provided that the DM bears a few points in mind. If the D&D monsters of the same name from the **Expert** and **Companion** set are used, the player-characters should be of at least 10th level — the D&D versions are much tougher than their Advanced cousins. The DM will find that the Phantom is an altogether different beast in the Companion Set, and not a direct equivalent of the AD&D Phantom, which is relatively harmless.

The alternative is to use the stats presented for the AD&D game (converting or inventing where necessary), and merely describe the monsters as 'ghosts' or 'spirits' when the encounter is revealed as such. Bearing in mind the tips presented in the **Ghosts** article which precedes this Brief Encounter, this should lead to a manageable and exciting challenge for your players.

The two new monsters are provided with full stats for the AD&D game at the back of this scenario.

Background

This adventure begins in a small town. It was designed with the **Pelinore** game world in mind, and the descriptions of people, institutions and locations are based on the published material for that campaign. DMs should alter aspects of this introduction and later parts of this scenario where there might be conflict with elements of their own campaign, or where the actions of players have altered the status of any of these elements during play in Pelinore. Ideally, the player-characters should be brought to the town by some means other than the promise of this adventure.

Players' Information

The player-characters are in Osport, a town of some 4000 inhabitants in the west of the County of Cerwyn, the site of an important silver mine. Whatever brought them to this place, it seems unlikely that there is sufficient prospect of adventure to make them stay. The lure of silver might tempt characters of less Lawful demeanour to consider diverting into their own pockets some of the estimated annual silver production of 350,000gp which is mined, smelted and transported from Osport, but this is a well-defended town. The garrison of 300 horsemen are quartered near the smelting plant. They and the infamous Sendrennial, Master of Magics, with several of his apprentices and 150 hired men accompany the shipments along the river Oss to the City League, 35 miles away. The mines themselves are protected by the town Constabulary and the dwarven foremen and overseers. It might be possible to indulge in a little petty theft, but the town is too tight for anything major.

Worse, since the County Horse and 200 men cleared out a bugbear stronghold, there has been no excitement to be had in the forests which surround the town and stretch off to the west. All-in-all, Osport has proved dry country for adventure — and at the prices charged by the local inns and eating places (twice the City League rate!) it is no place to take a holiday.

However, a group of broody adventurers lounging about the inns of a small town does not go unnoticed. Thus it is that, one morning after a silver shipment has left town and the troops with it, the Town Cryer, a member of the Heralds Guild, comes from his habitual spot in front of the Town Hall to the inn wherein the player-characters reside, to call his message:

> 'Hear ye, hear ye. Let all brave adventurers know that the Lord Piarris seeks their attendance on a matter of grave urgency. All who would come to his aid for honour's sake, or for profit, are asked to attend immediately.'

The adventurers, if they rouse from their slumbers, will be given directions to the large home of the Lord Piarris, which fronts onto the main square. Should they take the time to ask a few questions, they will discover that the Lord Piarris is a local magnate of some importance, perhaps second only to Mollin Deepdelver, the old Overseer of Excavations and Constructions. The Lord Piarris is a landowner, with an estate and hall to the north-east as well as the house on the square. He is respected and influential.

DM's Information

Further information on Osport, the mines, and the County of Cerwyn appeared in the **IMAGINE Magazine Special Edition**. However, sufficient material is contained in this issue for the purposes of this module. The DM should make every effort to make it clear to players that the silver is a great temptation, but is very well protected. This will make it easier to persuade them that they would not get away with any other kind of nefarious act in the town. They will not, for example, be able to discover anything about the Lord Piarris other than the sort of hearsay and gossip readily available in the taverns. Superficially a tale of good vs evil, The Curse of Arivale is much more complex.

The Lord's Tale

If the adventurers present themselves at the home of the Lord Piarris, they will be shown into a large hall, bedecked with the symbols of rank and wealth, and with a table furnished with food and drink. Others are present, many of whom show all the signs of being adventurers themselves (if the party has been in Osport for some time, the DM may have arranged a previous meeting between the player-characters and another party — the more acrimonious the better). Finally, a man in fine robes will appear, taking a seat at the head of the table. At his side, an aide will announce the arrival as Tyran, the Lord Piarris. One or two of the others in the room will also be addressed by name and rank, so that it will be clear to the party that several high-ranking members of the Town Council and the military are present. Then the Lord Piarris will speak (ignoring, in the fashion of the nobility of Cerwyn, any women in the room):

> 'Gentlemen, thank you for your attendance. I shall be brief, and I shall be grateful if you keep any questions you may have for a later time. My need is urgent.

'Yesterday morning, my daughter Eliré was abducted from the orangery at my estates at Arivale. Her shouts alerted my guards, who arrived too late to see more than the departure of the kidnappers. This messenger rode straight here with the news. From him I have learned that the kidnappers wore the red of my enemy, Ravin Maldar, lord of the Arivale Hall. From this news, I can judge the intent of the action. The age-old emnity of the Piarris and Maldar families will begin anew.

'For those of you who know not the story, let me quickly enlighten you. My estate, and the estate of the Maldar family, border each other. For many generations, the whole of the land around the hamlet of Arivale was owned by my family, and claimed by the Maldars. Such was the nature of the struggle that Arivale Hall became possessed of evil spirits, and my father finally abandoned the Hall to take up new residence at Piarris. The Maldars, finding us withdrawn, took over the Hall, whereupon the head of their clan died in the most suspicious circumstances. Ravin claimed my father had laid a trap; he vowed to be avenged. Eventually, the Maldars abandoned Arivale Hall as well, and it has been empty for many years. During that time, things were peaceful. With the events of yesterday, I fear that Ravin Maldar is beginning his revenge. Whatever his aim in kidnapping Eliré, I fear that she will never return alive — unless we are bold and take her.'

The Lord Piarris will then confer with the others present. One is the Constable of Osport, and he will undertake to search the vicinity of the town. An officer of the County Horse will promise to place troops at Arivale — just as soon as they are returned from delivering the silver shipment. A representative of the Countess Flavia, ruler of Cerwyn, will promise additional support; again there will be a delay. Finally, the Lord Piarris will turn to the assembled adventurers.

It is his firm belief that Eliré is being held prisoner at Arivale Hall, the only location within easy reach of Arivale Village and the Piarris estate not populated by servants and tenants of the Lord Piarris. He is fearful for her safety. He will offer 10,000gp for the safe return of his daughter, or 500 for a fruitless search of the Hall. If the players haggle, the Lord Piarris will try harder to persuade the other group, who will be prepared to go for 14,000gp. The DM should make it clear to the players that they must compete with the other group for the assignment, without indicating their rivals' sticking point.

Journey To Arivale

Leaving immediately (mounts will be provided should they have none), the adventurers will be able to reach the vicinity of Arivale Hall that afternoon. They will be guided to the village by the Piarris servant who brought the news of Eliré's abduction. Along the way, the PCs may question her, and may gain a little more of an insight into the nature of the Hall. She will tell them that the Hall lies beyond the village, down a disused track. It lies in walled grounds, turned now to marsh by years of neglect, and can only be reached along a causeway from the gate to the front of the house. Nobody has been up to the Hall for thirty years. The servant will be reluctant to talk much of the rumours of haunting, for she is certain that it is true. Once within the grounds, she will say, anything is possible. Arivale Hall is the most evil place in all of Cerwyn.

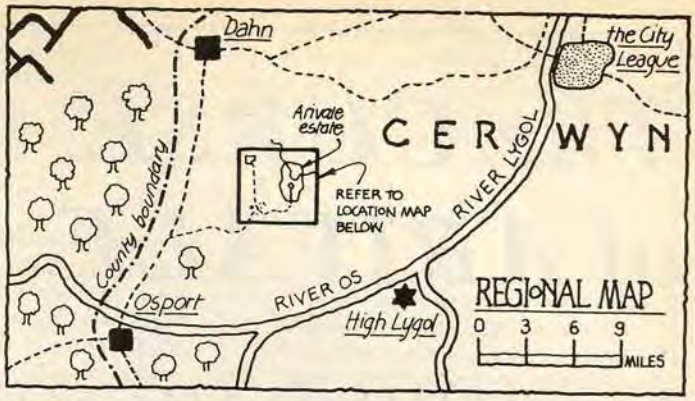
If the party pauses briefly in Arivale Village, this impression will be reinforced by the locals, all of whom shun the place. Some 'brave' souls will say it is all nonsense, but nevertheless will not accompany the party there; others will claim to have seen ghastly monsters defying description; others yet will hide themselves away, rather than talk of it. Beyond urging the party to proceed to the Hall, the servant will have no more to do with the quest either, and will head off towards the Piarris estate.

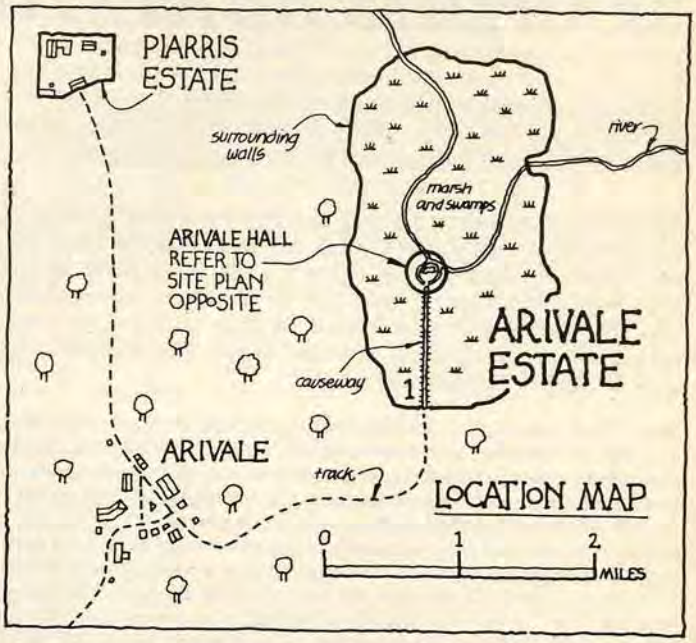
The Hall lies further down into the valley, just two miles from Arivale. From the track, it will appear as a walled area of fenland, with a single paved causeway passing arrow-straight to the courtyard of a large, lightless manor house. The villagers have placed crude warning signs about the walls, and crudely locked the gates with lengths of chain. When nearer, the adventurers will see the chain lying on the floor and the gates ajar.

Arivale Hall

1. The Causeway

Inside the gates, the grounds are dark and foreboding. The area off the Causeway is largely bog and fen. Should the party seek to approach the Hall through the fen, the DM should introduce three or four random encounters to deter them, each more unpleasant than the last. Many





creatures exist in the swamp, including hordes of giant rats, and many forms of undead. There is also a 35% chance per character that a disease will be contracted, which will take the form of reducing the victims' strength, dexterity and constitution by 1 each hour that they remain untreated. Should any ability fall below three, the character will fall into unconciousness. If it falls then below 0, the character should make a saving throw vs poison, dying if failed, and being incapacitated for d12 months if the save is made. Only complete rest for 1 week per lost point, or a **cure disease** plus one day's rest per lost point, will restore a character. By vivid descriptions of the rank nature of the fen, the DM should seek to discourage the party from following this route.

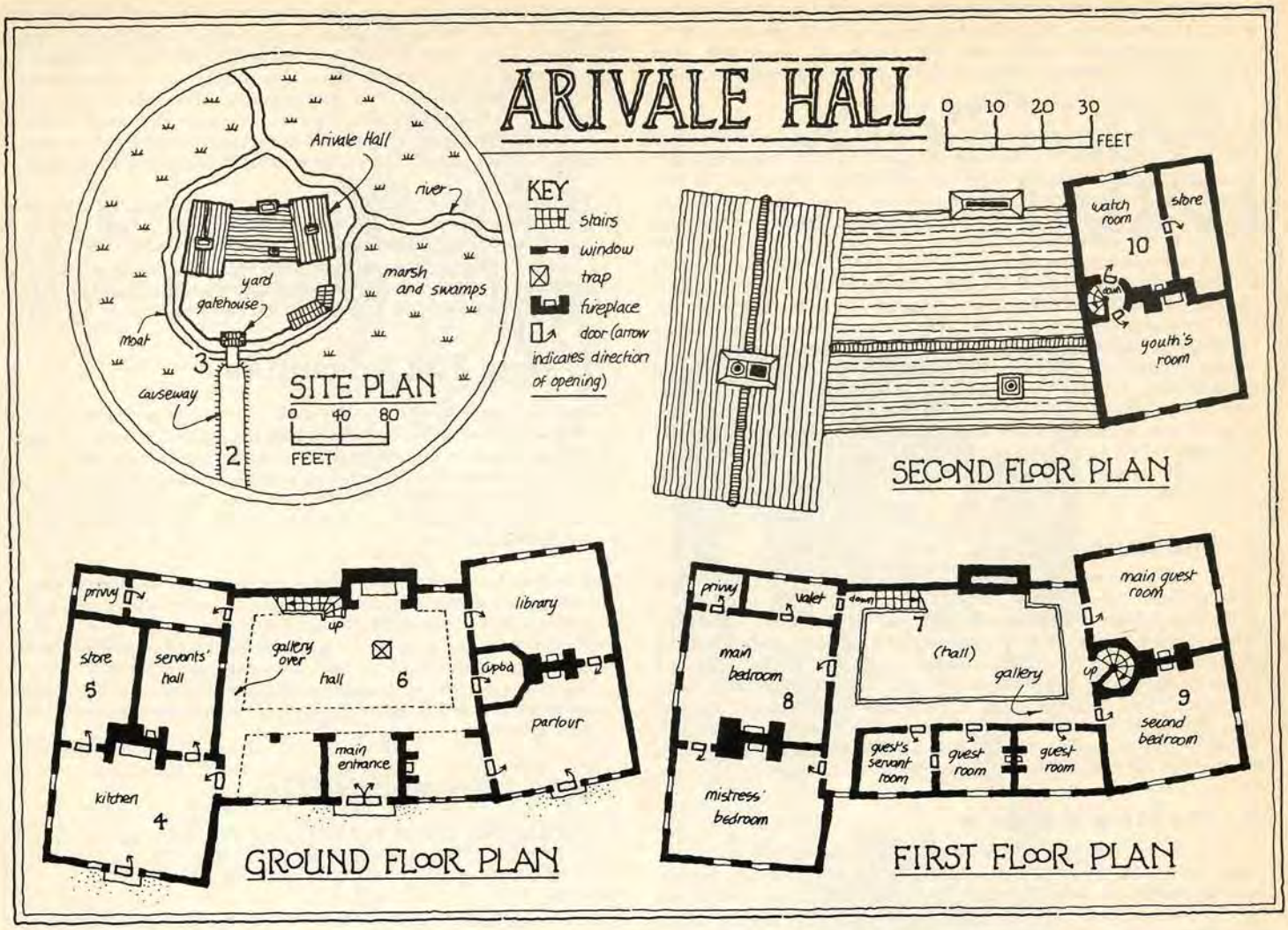
The Causeway is one mile long, twenty feet wide, and completely straight. Venturing along it, the party will travel just eighty yards before meeting the first occupant of the Hall. The body of a young soldier clad in old-fashioned green clothes hangs from a tree, perfectly preserved. He carries a white flag, and a set of bagpipes hangs from a belt around his shoulders. He died during the war between Piarris and Maldar, leading a small party under a flag of truce, which was set upon and massacred by mercenaries in Maldar pay. Now he is a form of **Groaning Spirit**.

As the adventurers approach, the lad will smile and ask for whom they fight, Piarris or Maldar. If they say the former, or claim neutrality in the war, he will wish them well and vanish. If they do not answer, or claim to be for the Maldar, he will offer to play a tune on his pipes. All those who hear him play must save vs spells or be driven permanently insane.

Once he disappears, or is destroyed by the adventurers, the boy's place will be taken by six ravens who will stare enigmatically down at the party. They will only attack if they see seriously weakened opponents, either now or when the party returns.

2. The Horseman

As the adventurers come to the end of the causeway, they will hear the sound of approaching horses. Their own mounts will become uncontrollable unless they dismount. As the sounds grow louder, each adventurer must save vs spells or suffer the effects of a **fear** spell. Suddenly, a huge black warhorse will appear, bearing an armoured figure cloaked in Maldar red. The cavalryman is swathed in mist, so that his head cannot be seen, but his intent is clear enough. He levels his lance, set to charge!



The fighter is a **Headless Horseman**; once a cavalier, he was dragged from his horse and slain by base peasants during the war. His burning pride keeps him upon this road, waiting for an opponent of noble birth. If there is a fighter in plate mail in the party, the Headless Horseman will wait for a challenge to single combat. Should none be forthcoming, he will charge. He will then pull out a black broadsword. In melee against a group, his attacks will be concentrated upon any thieves, considering them to be most like the villeins who slew him.

3. The Moat

The Causeway opens onto an open area before the house itself. Across the front of the Hall, there is a moat, mostly for decorative purposes, although it is largely filled with rank weeds now. It can be crossed most simply by an ordinary drawbridge operated from the gatehouse, but the party may also wade across the moat. From either the bank or the drawbridge, the adventurers will see a strange tableau in the water below. A woman, dressed only in a thin nightshirt, is wading through the water, searching through the weeds. Around her, seven other figures in servants' costume are doing likewise, occasionally ducking under the surface. The woman is shivering from the cold, and her flesh is blue. As soon as a member of the party is within 10 feet, she will beseech his or her aid — her child is lost in the weeds. If refused, the woman will try to possess the individual. She is a **Haunt**.

There is no child to be found in the water, but a prolonged search, of 20-30 rounds, will reveal a small china doll. When this is found, the woman will go beserk and attack the party. If she is defeated, the other figures will slowly fade away. Before they go, they will offer to answer three questions, which they will do truthfully.

The woman drowned trying to rescue her child when it fell from the drawbridge, pushed aside by a Piarris mercenary. The servants tried to help her, but fell victim to her dying curse and were turned into **Phantoms**. She cannot leave, and they will not be freed from her curse, until she finds her child or is destroyed.

4. The Kitchen

There are several ways to enter the house. The door to the kitchen is open, and if they enter through here, the adventurers will find the kitchen still partially stocked. There is a woman sitting at the long table, in a long yellow gown (curiously old-fashioned). She will ignore all the party members unless she sees a cleric, in which case she will cry out that she must confess a terrible sin. She was a daughter of the Maldar clan, and took advantage of the chaos of war to have a simple pedlar killed for the fine yellow cloth he bore. The body is bricked up in a corner of the kitchen. The woman will ask the cleric to help her bury the pedlar in proper ground, and will try to grasp his hands. If she succeeds, she will then attack. The woman is a **Spectre**.

This woman's story is true, but she conceals the true evil of her nature. There is even a body behind one wall of the kitchen (4a). If it is revealed, the spectre will recoil from the sight and flee.

5. The Storeroom

If the party looks in here, there is a 10% chance that they will see the lower half of the body of a woman, walking across the room at the ceiling. Her top half is to be found in the Main Bedroom, upstairs.

6. The Main Hall

This large room is furnished as if for a great feast, with long tables and benches running its length. A huge staircase rises from one end. Like the room in which the party was interviewed by the Lord Piarris, this room bears family trophies and honours — these belong to the Maldar. Most of the belongings of that family are heaped in this room, left behind when they abandoned the Hall. The tables are covered with metal goods, silverware and plates.

The room is occupied by two figures. In the body of the room is a **Poltergeist**, a servant executed to protect the information that there is a trapdoor under the rug. At the top of the stairs, surrounded by broken crockery, is **Ravin Maldar**. Maldar is almost insane — the sights and sounds of this place have placed a terrible strain on a mind already stressed by the failures of his family since the war with the Piarris. He is sheltering behind the bannister from the poltergeist, who has been throwing things at him since he tried to open the trapdoor.

Once the party enters, the poltergeist will split its attack equally between it and Ravin Maldar. Each round that the party is under attack, there is a 25% chance that Maldar will seize the opportunity to rush upstairs to the Second Bedroom. If he does, he will hold Eliré hostage until he can

extract a promise from the party to help him exorcise the ghosts from the Hall. The poltergeist will attack until destroyed, using the piled belongings of the Maldar as missiles. The party may brave the hail of missiles to pursue Ravin upstairs.

The belongings in this room would be worth 27,000gp if recovered (the DM should reduce this if there is a prolonged fight with the poltergeist!), although they are too bulky to be carried away by the party. The only expensive items that might be removed are three silver candlesticks (worth 300gp each), a service of cutlery of silvered steel and ivory (worth 2500gp) and a woven rug of finest Kosrean wool (worth 400gp). The greater treasure is below the trapdoor, in a 10 foot square vault. There is platinum coin to the value of 9000gp, a bearer bond on the City League Weaver's Guild for 30,000gp (and what a fight it is going to be to get that from them after 50 years! — the DM can indulge in a long-running campaign of stalling; bleeding money for legal fees in the Court of Ten Thousand Ravens; obstruction; intimidation; physical violence from the Guild Militia....), and the belongings of Ravin's father, a cleric in the service of a LN deity. These are a suit of **chainmail +2**, a **flail +1**, five vials of holy water, a scroll with the spells **cure light wounds**, **cure disease** and **bless**, and a **bell of peace**. This last is a magic item that Ravin's father never used — a tragic irony in the face of all the suffering that took place during the feud (see page 9).

7. The Staircase

At the turn of the stairs, near where Ravin was sheltering, there is a complete suit of plate mail, mounted on a pedestal, along with a shield and a two-handed sword. It does not move as the party approaches. These items are **plate mail +1**, a **shield of assassin detection**, and a **two-handed sword +2**. If the party comes within three feet, they may finally be convinced that it is not ghostly — but it does bear a simple mechanical trap. If it is disturbed, a gauze sack in the helm will tear and release a dust cloud. All within 15' must save vs poison or take 6d6 damage. Even if the save is made, a **cure disease** will be needed within 48 hours or the victim will be incapacitated for 2d20 days.

8. The Main Bedroom

In here is the top half of the woman glimpsed in the storeroom downstairs. She is beautiful, though hazy, and all males who see her must save vs spells or be **charmed**. The woman will simply wish to kiss an adventurer. She was the flirtatious wife of the Lord Piarris's grandfather, who killed her during the wars, intending to blame the murder on the Maldars. Unable to carry the body downstairs, he cut it in two, and carried the lower half down. His brother, outraged at what had occurred, killed him before he could remove the other half, which lay in the room for days. Now the woman is an **Apparition**, flirting endlessly. She will only attack in self defence.

9. The Second Bedroom

This room is the place where Ravin Maldar has brought Eliré Piarris. She is bound and gagged, terrified by what she has seen, but mercifully alive. If Ravin is able to escape the poltergeist, he will be here also, with a knife at her throat, making his demands that the adventurers must help him reclaim Arivale Hall from the ghosts. If the party refuses, he is crazed enough to do the deed. If this happens, the party will see a **Revenant-Magna** arise, to pursue Ravin Maldar until it can slay him. All those who witness this must save vs spells or be driven insane. Such will be its insane desire for revenge, that if an adventurer kills Ravin after her death, she will pursue that adventurer instead.

10. The Watch Room

If they enter this sparse, unfurnished room, the adventurers will find it occupied by two figures. Two men sit propped against the west wall, with horrible open wounds in their chests; blood is scattered all around. Both are ashen-faced — and the DM should describe them initially in the same way as the various ghosts have been introduced.

These are Ravin's two hirelings, the latest in a long line of mercenaries introduced into the feud between the families. The fighter, wearing chainmail and a red scarf, is dead. The **Thief**, who wears leather armour and green leggings, is still alive — just. These witless dupes obeyed their instructions, and helped kidnap Eliré. Having brought her to Arivale Hall, they were placed on watch, and were then treacherously attacked. Ravin wanted no witnesses left alive. The Thief is on -1 hit points — slipping nearer to death with each moment — and will utter a low moan as the party enters the room. The DM should allow the party to come to its own conclusions. A cleric will have no success in 'turning' these 'ghosts', nor — obviously — will they rise to attack. If the party aids the Thief, the DM may make an award of 500xp. Binding him, and casting a **cure light wounds** will suffice to keep him alive until they can bring him back to Osport.

If the party merely leaves him behind, the DM may wish to make individual members of the party, depending on character class and alignment, aware of their mistake. They may be disturbed by dreams, or shaken by visions — so that they cannot relearn spells, rest to recover lost hit points, and fight at a -4 penalty. These were not evil or chaotic men; just misguided, and the lawful and good members of the party — particluarly the clerics — will have committed a wrong themselves.

If they go so far as to attack and finish off the Thief, the DM should penalise the adventurers all the more. Only an **atonement** will remove this taint, so that the character may function normally. The DM must judge the circumstances of the mistake as they have arisen, but further penalties might include the loss of xp for the adventure, or the rising of The Thief as a revenant, seeking out the one who finished his life!

Ending The Adventure

If the party returns to the Lord Piarris' house with Eliré alive and well, Tyran will keep his promise, and pay the adventurers in full. He will add a 2500gp 'bonus' to this if the party brings back proof of the death of Ravin Maldar, and will offer them further employment as guards at the Piarris estate. If Ravin Maldar is brought back alive, there will be a trial at the Town Hall in Osport, and the adventurers, as witnesses, will be overnight celebrities.

If, on the other hand, Eliré is killed, the adventurers will find out that in a feud as ugly as this, it is not a case of good vs evil; Tyran Piarris has his dark side. The DM could find that this could be the start of a rich vein of adventure, as the Lord Piarris pays the 500gp he promised, but then pays a high-level assassin to seek out these "servants of the Maldars". The feud is not over — there are many other members of both families scattered all over this part of Pelinore. For the players, this could be just the beginning....

Monsters and NPCs

TYRAN, THE LORD PIARRIS: AC -1; MV 6"; Fighter 9; hp 78; #AT 3/2; D 4-11 (d8+1 strength, **sword +2**); S 16, I 12, W 13, D 17, C 15, Ch 17; AL LE; xp 1992; THACO 10

Groaning Spirit: AC 0; MV 15"; HD 7; hp 35; #AT 1; D 1-8; SA pipes — save vs magic or insanity; SD +1 weapons or better to hit; MR 50%; Int exceptional; AL CE; Source MM; xp 2800; THACO 13

Ravens: AC 7; MV 1"/36"; HD 1/4; hp 2 each; #AT 1; D 1; SA attacks eye 10%; SD never surprised; MR Std; Int Animal; AL N; Source MM2; xp 0; THACO 20*

Haunt: AC 0/victim's AC; MV 6"/as victim; HD 5; hp 26/victim's hp; #AT 1 as 5HD monster; D 2pts DEX/by weapon; SA possession; Int non-; AL NE; Source MM2; xp 285; C8 turns: no; THACO 15

Phantom: AC nil; MV 9"; HD nil; hp nil; D nil; SA **fear**; Int nil; AL NG; Source MM2; xp 0; C8 turns: no; THACO N/A

Spectre: AC 2; MV 15"/30"; HD 7+3; hp 45; #AT 1; D 1-8; SA Energy drain; SD +1 or better weapon to hit; MR not affected by **sleep**, **charm**, **hold**, cold, poison or paralyzation; Int High; AL LE; Source MM; xp 1695; C8 turns: 10; THACO 13

Poltergeist: AC 10; MV 6"; HD 1-4hp; hp 3; SA thrown objects cause **fear**; SD invisible, magical or silver weapons to hit; Int low; AL LE; Source FF; xp 37; C8 turns: D*; THACO 15

Ravin Maldar: AC 2; MV 6"; Fighter 9; hp 93; #AT 1; D 1-8 (sword); S 14; I 14; W 8; D 13; C 18; Ch 13; AL NE; xp 2202; THACO 13

Apparition: AC 0; MV 24"; HD 8; hp 32; #AT 1; D nil; SA illusionary damage; SD silver or magical weapons to hit; Int ave; AL CE; Source FF; xp 1320; C8 turns: 10; THACO N/A

Thief: AC 6; MV 12"; Thief 1; hp -1 (5); #AT 0(1); D by weapon; S 12, I 8, W 9, D 16, C 16, Ch 11; AL N; xp nil; THACO N/A

Credits

Original Conception, Plotline	Chris Barlow
Development, New Monsters/Magic Items	Paul Cockburn
Assisted by	Tom Kirby, Graeme Morris, Phil Gallagher and Jim Bambra
Maps	Paul Ruiz
Art	Keith Cooper

New Monsters

HEADLESS HORSEMAN

	Rider	Mount
FREQUENCY:	*Very rare*	*Very rare*
No APPEARING:	*1*	*1*
ARMOUR CLASS:	*-1*	*4*
MOVE:	*9"*	*15"*
HIT DICE:	*6*	*4+4*
% IN LAIR:	*nil*	*nil*
TREASURE TYPE	*nil*	*nil*
No of ATTACKS	*1*	*3*
DAMAGE	*3-18 (lance)/ 2-9 (sword)*	*1-8/1-8/1-3*
SPECIAL ATTACKS	*Fear*	*none*
SPECIAL DEFENCES	*+2 or better weapon to hit*	*magic or silver weapons to hit*
MAGIC RESISTANCE	*Immune to charm, sleep, hold or cold based attacks*	*Immune to charm, sleep, hold or cold based attacks*
INTELLIGENCE	*Very*	*Animal*
ALIGNMENT	*LE*	*NE*
SIZE	*M*	*L*

Headless Horsemen are the spirits of cavalrymen who have died in violent circumstances — normally beheaded. Very often they were cavaliers or noblemen in life, and retain a sense of purpose into afterlife. They are normally encountered on roadways, heralded by the sound of approaching horses that will cause **fear** in all creatures of animal intelligence. The horseman will appear as a figure swathed in mist, so that the missing head cannot be detected from distance. Once within twenty yards, this abnormality will be visible, and all who see it must save vs magic or suffer the effects of a **fear** spell.

Most headless horseman are encountered riding pell-mell, as if to fufil some urgent mission. These will only attack in self-defence. Others, who take upon themselves the specific purpose of guarding a place or object, will offer single combat by word or action, charging with the lance and then using a sword in melee. They will never attack a cleric, except in self-defence, and may be turned as a spectre.

REVENANT-MAGNA

FREQUENCY:	*Very rare*
No APPEARING:	*1*
ARMOUR CLASS:	*0*
MOVE:	*18"*
HIT DICE:	*10*
% IN LAIR:	*nil*
TREASURE TYPE	*nil*
No of ATTACKS	*2*
DAMAGE	*2-12/2-12*
SPECIAL ATTACKS	*fear, insanity*
SPECIAL DEFENCES	*+1 or better weapons to hit*
MAGIC RESISTANCE	*80%*
INTELLIGENCE	*Exceptional*
ALIGNMENT	*LE*
SIZE	*M*

Revenant-Magnas are the spirits of innocents slain in an evil fashion. Unlike ordinary revenants, they may only arise from the body of persons too weak to defend themselves in life; a child, or an adult with strength of less than 8. Once reborn, they are enormously strong and are driven by an insane desire for revenge — no trace of their former innocence will remain. As with a normal revenant, they will pursue the individual(s) who slew them, never resting, and never erring in their pursuit. They will ignore all those in their path, unless they seek to halt their pursuit, but all characters that see them must save vs spells or be driven insane.

One last diabolical twist separates these creatures from the normal revenant; their need for revenge is such that, should their quarry be slain by someone else, they will pursue the slayer with equal vigour. It is possible for a 'chain' of responsibility to be built up, and for the revenant-magna to finally achieve its purpose on an entirely blameless individual.

New Magic Item

Bell of Peace: This small, delicate item is made of clear glass and gold leafed, and is normally stored in a padded box made of ash. In the long distant past, these items were relatively common in Pelinore, keeping the nations from war, until a weakness was discovered which perverted its use. Basically, when chimed, the bell has a range of sixty feet, and all within hearing distance must save vs spells or drop their weapons for d6 turns (the effect is negated by any attack). It may be chimed once a week. Since the note is magical, it cannot be silenced by any physical means, although it will not penetrate the circle of a **silence** spell. Thus its use as an instrument of maintaining the peace was destroyed; at the siege of Cannartha, a youth approached the lines of the Theocratic Knights, and tolled the bell, while his fellows from the city sat within the radius of their clerics' magic. The Cannarthans then sallied forth, and the army of the Theocratic Principalities was routed.

xp value 3,000; gp value 25,000; **Creation method:** bell cast by expert glass-smith, decorated by goldsmith (cost 12,750gp). **Enchant an item, charm, clairaudience, permanency** cast during process.

New Magic Item

Shield of assassin detection: A very common item among the nobility and rulers of Pelinore, the shield appears to be plain white — it cannot be painted or decorated in any way. It acts as a **shield +1, +4 vs normal missiles**, and offers two additional protections to the owner. First, should an assassin approach within ten feet, the shield will turn bright red, and will cry an alarm. In such circumstances it will also automatically parry the first strike of an assassin. Its second protection is that once per year the owner may ask it who is the most likely person to seek his or her life; the shield will answer accurately. Many a plot in its very infancy has been revealed in this way. The existence of this item and its widespread use makes the class of assassin largely powerless — but it has a flaw. If an assassin or his minions can sprinkle unholy water upon the shield, it becomes useless for 2d10 days, and will act as a **cursed shield (AC 10)** during that time.

xp value 800; **gp value** 8,000; **Creation Process:** common shield enameled white (normal cost x40); **enchant an item, detect evil, magic mouth, protection/normal missiles, wish**, and **permanency**.

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PELINORE

THE BIG WIDE WORLD

INTRODUCTION

Thus far, **IMAGINE** magazine has mapped but a small part of that vast entity known as **Pelinore**. If you bought IMAGINE Magazine Special Edition 1, you will have two maps that show the County of Cerwyn, an area immediately beyond the City League; and the additional states within 100 miles or so of the City. Some details of these areas' social, geographic and political natures have been sketched out already, and your characters may already be out there, marching beyond Bereduth or the Cammarus See. Even if they haven't, sooner or later someone will ask a question about the nature of Pelinore that is so general that it defies our plan to grow out from the City League. This article, then, (and the one to follow, on the Deities of Pelinore) will try to give you, the DM, answers to the very basic questions about the world of Pelinore.

RUNNING A CAMPAIGN

There are two important points to be recognised here. First, these notes contain information which ordinary characters would not normally get to know. If you feel it is necessary to pass some of this information on to your players do so slowly and carefully. Second, where we give you information about the world which can be given to your players, you should remember that this is knowledge free of local perspective. Remember that truth is relative! If the characters ask questions you should make the answers consistent with their background and the place where they are currently staying. The world as seen from High Lygol is a very different place from that seen from the high steppes.

The way that a DM presents information about a campaign world is one of the most important elements in the success of that campaign; it is one of the key skills in being a good DM. Pelinore is being presented in such a way that could almost mirror the development of a character's own knowledge, moving out from the original base of operations. The DM should consider all his knowledge about the campaign world to fall into one of three categories. The first is that of common knowledge — for example, a character in the City League is going to know about the County of Cerwyn, and the way the law is administered in the League, and what languages are spoken commonly around him, even if this information hasn't been revealed to that player yet. Therefore, if a player requests information that his or her character can reasonably be expected to know already, tell that player there and then. This will include a wide spread of information of a basic kind — prices of common items, locations of important buildings in the City where the characters live, where things can be found and so on. Bear in mind what you, the DM, and the player have agreed about the character; if the character is the son of a merchant, he is very likely to know something about foreign lands, while the daughter of a lawyer will know how to go about hiring a lawyer for a trial.

The second category is that of unobtainable information. Here you must be guided by the likely top-limit of the characters' experience levels. If your players are running 37th level mega-MUs, traipsing about the multiverse, then this category isn't going to include very much (what on Earth are you doing mincing around the City League anyway?). However, at 'saner' levels, the DM can consider all sorts of knowledge beyond the realms of any character in Pelinore. Thus, you can safely ignore all knowledge of celestial mechanics, nuclear fusion theory and the Creation. Because of the unique character of Pelinore, we are going to be ignoring the so-called laws of physics, and what have you. This is fantasy — forget what you know about the ways planets and stars move. So, for example, you can present the information that Pelinore is a flat world merely by stating that that is somebody's opinion, or is a commonly-held 'truth'. Whether it is or not doesn't matter — as far as the playing of the game is concerned, the world is (currently) flat.

That last statement contains information belonging to the third category: that is to say information which is not common knowledge, but is obtainable somehow. A low-level character might never have heard that the world is flat, but it is possible that such information will be gained one day. Likewise, characters learn about greater magic, foreign lands, new inns or new creatures. This information will come from personal experience, or from interaction with NPCs. The more obscure it is, the harder it should be for player-characters to discover it. If a character in a new town asks where the nearest tavern is, that needn't take long to discover, unless there are strange circumstances. If that same character wants to know where Worldheart is, the DM should start a lengthy chain of enquiry, with scraps of information from dozens of sources, at horrendous cost, and lots of false trails — assuming the DM wants the players to go looking for Worldheart in the first place. In dealing with information of this kind, don't be frightened to change the 'truth' according to the source of the information. If a character asks a L/LG priest what the meaning of life is, the answer will be very different from that given by a C/CE thief!

There is one additional complication to all this. Because we hope that you will use Pelinore as a base for your own ideas, as well as for all the material we publish, we have a policy of leaving certain areas 'blank', that is open for you to map and populate as you will. Thus far, we have designated three 'safe' areas, at three different levels of play, where we guarantee never to publish detail. There's nothing to stop you ignoring anything that we publish, of course, if it contradicts something that you have personally designed; but if you want to play safe, then drop your idea into one of the following: a) In the City League, all that area known as The Communities; b) In Cerwyn, the small towns of Amfleat and Arncastle and the surrounding areas; c) Beyond Cerwyn, the area SE of the Sarpath mountains

To those three we are now adding a fourth — the continent of Aurianne. This continent is marked on the sketch-map of Pelinore; it is yours to do with as you will — we will never produce material for that area.

Think hard about what you tell players when you DM. All the information you possess is like a gigantic library, and anyone ought to be able to get at it if they know where to look. This is one of the main pleasures and chief penalties of running a campaign — deciding what categories of information there are and how to leak it in a manner likely to pique the curiosity of your players. If you do a good job, the players will think that they are determining the course of their adventures and you will have a first class campaign. If you are using the City League you do have a large advantage, as there are many libraries that, as DM, you could have the players visit if there is something in particular you think they need to know. Their existence means that information about the world, its history, geography, politics, and population can be presented to the player characters at a reasonably early stage if you want.

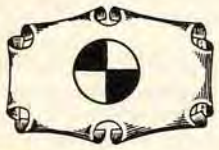
THE NATURE OF THE WORLD

Unlike any other gaming environment, Pelinore is much, much more than just a world. It is a symbol of the central struggle of Opposites. Law and Chaos, Good and Evil, Beauty and Ugliness, Happiness and Misery; more than just a battleground, it is often the very battle itself. Throughout Pelinore, struggles for supremacy between these Opposites are taking place. Sometimes the struggles are major events sweeping across continents, sometimes they are private battles in mountain fastnesses. Characters could live out their lives unaware of any of this or be involved as prime movers.

Philosophers and Sages who have studied these matters know that Harmony is the route to peace. In order to achieve Harmony the

Opposites must reside side by side in tolerant mutual acceptance. This is not the way of many, not least the gods! Each group of gods has a vital interest in the maintenance of their own extreme — be it law, chaos, good, evil or whatever — and only those who are truly neutral recognise the need for Harmony.

As can be seen from the map Pelinore is a big place. As DM you will need to be aware not only of the relative positions of named sites but also of how to discuss them with your players. It spoils the fun if you simply present them with a map; the best way to do it is, after you have placed your own designs where you want them, to 'leak' geographical information to the players based on what they can actually see or gather from local NPCs. The map on the opposite page is far too big ever to be used as a playing map, it can only serve as reference, and we will be filling in the 'blank' areas, concentrating on those parts of the world within easy travelling distance of the City League at first. Keep it clearly in mind when thinking about the World of Pelinore. And don't forget that the continent of Aurianne, just a hop, skip and a teleport away from the League, is yours to develop.



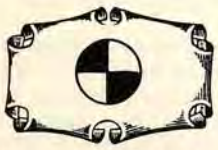
WORLDHEART

Over the years tales of a place called Worldheart have reached the ears of the wise. Rumoured to be precisely at the centre of Pelinore, Worldheart is said to be Harmony itself. These rumours are given credence because they seem to be borne out by the facts. As the centre of Pelinore is reached life becomes more Harmonious (and less exciting for adventurers). As the rim is approached so Harmony disappears, giving way to outbreaks of absolutes — areas of total chaos or order, good or evil, or strange mixtures of extremes. This is adventureland, and the parts of Pelinore we will be exploring are to be found here.

Some insist that Worldheart actually exists whilst others maintain it is merely a metaphysical place — to be dreamed of but never reached. Inevitably many have set off in search of this fabled spot, but if any found it is not known; none have returned to tell their tale. Indeed, it is not certain that a normal adventurer would recognise it. For such a normal adventurer would find this place completely incomprehensible having been brought up in a world where there is so little Harmony in anything. It is possible that only adventurers approaching true personal Harmony (some ascetic Druids, perhaps) would recognise, and thus see, Worldheart. One can even imagine a robust mixed group of players walking straight through the place and never knowing!

As some kind of abstract goal Worldheart is meaningful, but no adventurer could seriously expect to find it; so we, as designers, have no intention of defining it. It is there to provide background and reason to the strange alignments and ambitions of the inhabitants of Pelinore. By all means let your players and NPCs discuss it and seek it; but remember that those that approach the kind of mental attitude needed to see it would gradually stop wanting to — for all the usual reasons of greed and mayhem, anyway.

Around Worldheart grew up the Perfect Kingdoms, realms where it is said only the exalted may walk, though they walk with the Seven Great Kings. Further from the centre are other lands, from massive Empires to small Principalities, and beyond them still more lands, and seas, and yet more lands. And at each remove from the centre, from where Harmony is, other forces gain temporary dominance, and life is more precarious. One such place is the area of those states known as the Theocratic Principalities, where everyone follows a Lawful/Lawful Good alignment. Eventually, it is said, there is the Rim, where absolutes reign, allowing new forms to venture into existence. It is adventure incarnate, a frontier beyond which even the gods cannot remain unaltered....



GEOGRAPHY of PELINORE

Pelinore is designed to accept the ideas of thousands of gamers, therefore it has to be large. Just how large though.... well, what mere mortal is ever going to be able to map it all? The commonly accepted wisdom of the greatest (and most expensive!) sages in the City League is that the world is like a plate with a ragged edge. From Worldheart to the closest point on the Rim is impossible to measure — is it constant anyway? — but, at the very least, the distance must be many thousands of leagues. Likewise, no-one has ever managed to find out how deep the world is, but there must be a reasonable amount of substance under the surface, or a few more miners would have disappeared.... (incidentally, many Dwarves believe in a God of Miners who waits on the other side with a net).

Quickly through a few basics. Yes, there is gravity (but not always — and not always to the same extent or in the same direction!); yes, there is an atmosphere, several miles high; yes, there are volcanoes, tapping a huge well of magma beneath the surface of Worldheart itself, and chanelled through ducts to the outer lands; yes, there are stars, and one of them acts as a Pole Star for the measurement of direction (although some churches prefer to use maps that accept only Worldheart as a fixed point, no matter how distant). Climate works very differently, with centres of energy around which pressure centres are formed. Weather conditions tend to be very localised, particularly close to the Rim. The climate is stable and boring at Worldheart, growing progressively wilder and more interesting further out. The area around the City League is fairly temperate, with a high pressure centre to the south-east in the Steppe country, and a low pressure centre off to the west over the sea. Because these centres 'pulse', there are 'seasonal' variations of a sort. In 'winter', the wind is westerly, wet and very cold, while the 'summer' sees week after week of a monotonous hot wind known as the Sarpathic, after the range of mountains it passes over.

The City League lies between Worldheart and the Rim though as no-one your players is likely to meet will know exactly where, it will be easy for you to be indefinite. The geography of the area immediately around the City League and the County of Cerwyn is shown on the map in the IMAGINE Magazine Special Edition #1. It is reasonable to assume that most of this area will be vaguely known by most player-characters, and that their birthplace is likely to fall within its bounds.

TIME

Time runs naturally throughout Pelinore — even close to the Rim, clocks run quite smoothly. The units of time are very similar to those we are used to, although the rationale is very different. The year is measured by watching the Pole Star, which appears to be higher in the sky in the 'summer'. Careful measurement of this change has led scholars to work out their 'year' as 360 days. These are quite arbitrarily divided into ten equal 'months', which most people near the League name after the usual events of that time of year (see the table below). The 'week' is another arbitrary division, which varies in many countries. In the City League and neighbouring states there are five 'weeks' of seven days in each month, with the thirty-sixth day being designated the Month-day, a holiday.

Scholars differ as to how day and night occur. Some maintain the existence of a War of Light being waged by the gods though they are hard pressed to explain the regularity of the alternate periods. Others say that the Celestial Dragon is eternally circling Pelinore breathing great flame to provide light (and incidentally causing clouds and meteorological anomalies on the way). Yet others say the light comes through a tiny hole in the sky which at night is closed. Whatever the truth Pelinore is subjected to nights and days and sunsets and sunrises in the 'normal' way (the best course is not to worry too much about it but to keep reading IMAGINE in case a major discovery is made!).

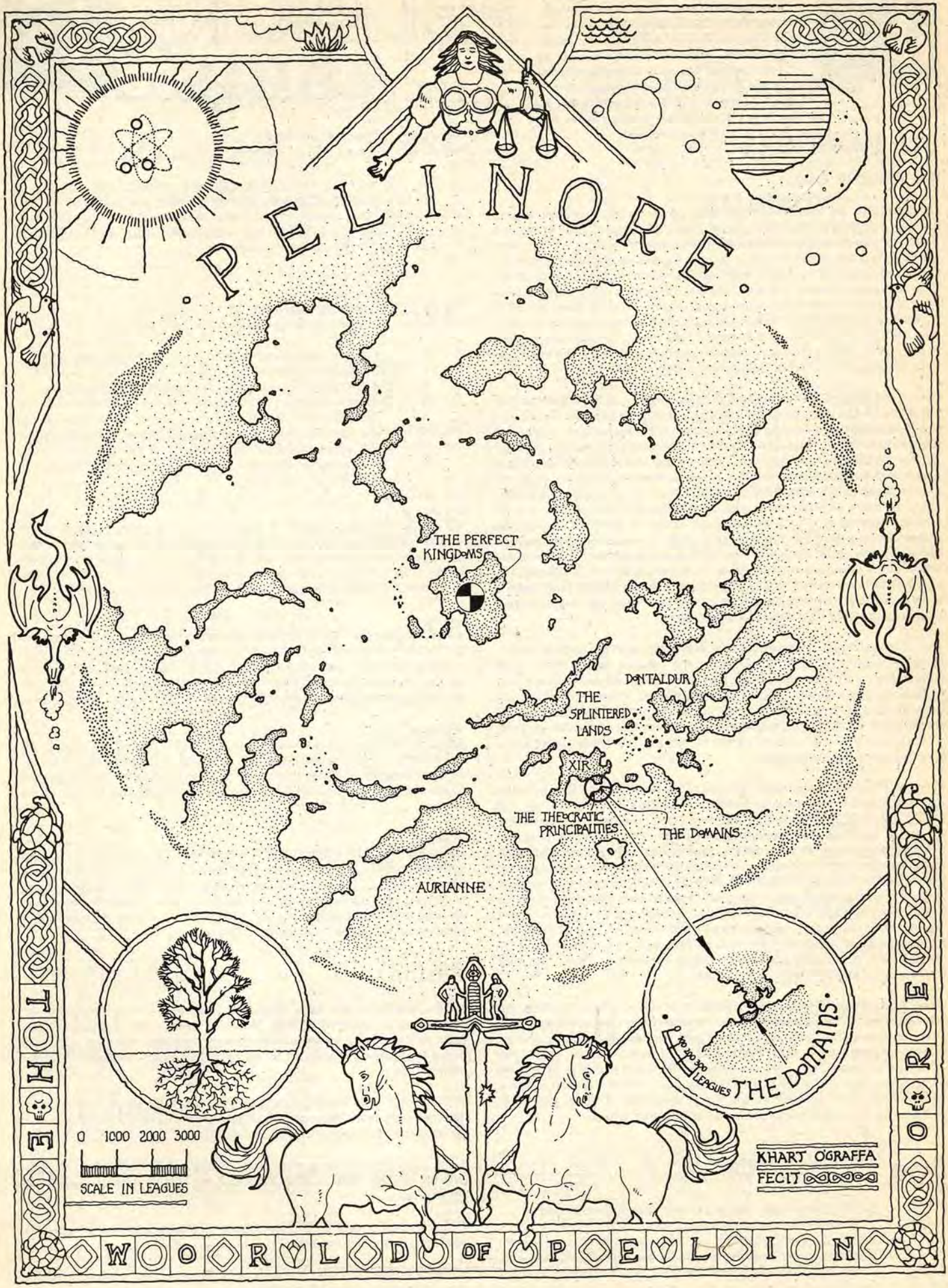
Months of the Year

City League	Cerwyn	Xir
Parade	Festival	Newtax
Shriven	Shrivetide	Grain
Dibble	Delve	Seacalm
Afterdibble	Easetide	Earlycrop
Tarmenine	Tarmen	Highwine
Armstide	Joy	Harvest
Harvest	Harvest	Afterharvest
Revel	Bration	Lasttrade
Evenmas	Evenmas	Store
Pharastine	Pharast	Account

Days of the Week

Kerdreth
Lian
Avann
Movenlidreth
Theros
Preas-ir-khan
Obrerra

Tarmenine, Tarmen, Pharstine and Pharast are named after local deities (coming soon! – the Gods of Pelinore) and Armstide is named after the Katar (Master-at-Arms). The Xir calendar is widely used by journeying classes. Normal notation is for individual days to be named, then the number of the week, the month, then the year; thus Kerdreth 1 Festival is New Year's Day, and Pharast Month-Day is the last day of the Cerwyn year.


PELINORE
THE PERFECT KINGDOMS
DANTALDUR
THE SPLINTERED LANDS
XIR
THE THEOCRATIC PRINCIPALITIES
THE DOMAINS
AURIANNE
0 1000 2000 3000
SCALE IN LEAGUES
100 200 300 LEAGUES
THE DOMAINS
KHARJ OGRAFFA FECIT
THE WORLD OF POELION

PELINORE

Deep in the heart of Pelinore has grown the City League: a mighty hive of humanity, offering everything an adventurer could desire. Each month IMAGINE magazine presents a few buildings from within the City; describes their inhabitants; and offers one or two ideas for adventures. This provides an ideal campaign base for the DM who can collect these articles and steadily build them up into the most comprehensive campaign setting available. Copy them, or cut them out and store them in a ring file — and you need never be short of an idea for a City encounter again.

32. BASILISKS

by Venetia Lee

The Basilisks, so-called because 'They move so fast everyone else is turned to stone', are a street gang of the City League. They come in a variety of sizes — aged between 6 and 14 (apart from their leaders, who are slightly older) and work the streets as thieves and fighters. There are two main types of Basilisk — the fresh-faced and innocent, who can cry their way out of trouble if all else fails, and the precociously shrewd, who try not to get into trouble. One thing is true of all — they are born survivors. The harsh initiation tests inflicted on new members make sure they don't carry any passengers. These might, for example, consist of attaching a flag to the topmost tower of the Magic Users' School (**9**), or obtaining one of Petronna Goldenhair's whips (**15e**)

For most of the time, they are indistinguishable from any other band of scruffy kids. Their clothing is made up of a cunning mixture of rags and concealed leathers which are equivalent to AC7/8. However, a group of Basilisks in full regalia would be an intimidating sight for the average citizen should they ever see them. This regalia is dark red leather armour and cloaks, which reverse to black. Around their left wrists are wrapped chains (used as a weapon these inflict 1-6 points of damage) and they carry an array of other weapons, chiefly daggers and slings. It is, of course, necessary to maintain a tough image to warn off rival gangs — besides, it suits their egotism. They make themselves very useful to various of the upper echelons of local thieves' guilds and are therefore under some measure of protection. To ensure that this continues, the leader makes sure all contracts undertaken are carried out. Their base is a semi-derelict mansion set between the Walk and the Arena, whose absentee landlord has forgotten its existence.

The Basilisk leader for the past three years has been Fionn Messenger. He was brought up, after the death of his parents, by his sister, Siall (**33c**). She is a thief and already an accomplished con-woman (the Messengers have been a bad lot for generations). There is little love lost between brother and sister and their public insults are famous. However it would not do to harm one and leave the other out of the calculations — they have a strong sense of family loyalty and are ready to give aid or exact vengeance, if necessary.

Fionn has firm ideas about the running of the Basilisks and they are now one of the pre-eminent gangs in this part of the City League. They are well organised and available for hire in a number of capacities. However, as Fionn believes they should stay out of other people's quarrels, they prefer to fight only for themselves. They usually work as lookouts, distractors and spies. Their success at this depends largely on their youth — as spies they frequently go unnoticed and few suspect them of organised ill-doing rather than childish mischief. Under Fionn's leadership the Basilisks are better fed, clothed and have more pocket money than they would working for an adult fence — hence they attract the best recruits. Of course, Fionn is still secreting a substantial cut for himself as he now needs a foothold in some business on the right side of the law to extend further his operations.

Fionn's lieutenants are Kneft Mor (**32b**) and Grimling Ashnut (**32c**), the 'Iron Halfling'. Kneft, a young fighter, is strong and slow thinking — but not as stupid as he looks. He insists Fionn explain all his plans and on several occasions his slow examination of some hastily conceived scheme has saved them all from disaster. Grimling (Grim) is nasty and dangerous. Fionn believes he has Grim under control — that it is just a question of pointing him in the right direction. If Grim ever lost confidence in his leader, he could run completely amuck.

32a **Fionn Messenger**; M; T6; N/NE;
Longsword, chain; AC 2; hp 26/34

H	
S	14
I	14
W	9
D	18
C	15
Ch	15

☐ *Very smooth and flashy dresser, **ring of protection +2***
☐ *Leader of Basilisks, sharper/filcher, spy*
☐ *Clever, loyal, ambitious, egotist, pragmatist*
☐ *Knows many thieves, frequents Madam Zalu's (**22**) and the Cornucopia (**33**) for his leisure, often works for Harben Mousecraft (**33e**)*

THE CITY LEAGUE

32b **Kneft Mor**; M; F3; N/NE;
Bastard sword, chain; AC 7/8; hp 38/34

H	
S	18
I	8
W	13
D	12
C	18
Ch	9

☐ *Very big, wears what looks like a rubbish bag*
☐ *Fionn's (**32a**) most faithful follower and bodyguard*
☐ *Less stupid than he looks, obeys orders*
☐ *As Fionn, but is in love with Zoreen (**22b**), and ensures the Basilisks leave her alone.*

32c **Grimling Ashnut**; M; F3/T4; C/CE;
Shortsword, sling, chain; AC 4; hp 20/24

½	
S	14
I	14
W	9
D	18
C	15
Ch	15

☐ *Basilisk regalia well hidden under rags, cherubic looks*
☐ *Lieutenant of Basilisks*
☐ *Killer, sometimes insane, dangerous when frightened*
☐ *After witnessing his mother's murder and enduring his father's failure to avenge it through fear, Grim has rejected the Halfling way of life for a 'tougher one'; he spends most of his time frightened and hiding it – it's when he can't hide it any longer that he's dangerous; those who know him deny it and avoid him*

32d **Margaret**, aged 13, but looking a very innocent 10, is the leader of the little ones (under 10s). She was rescued by Fionn from sale to a slaver (her parents were very poor). She is an excellent spy. Once when caught in the act of pickpocketing, she counter-accused her victim of assaulting her and embarrassed him into letting her escape.

32e **Lucy** is 12 and is the exception to the rule that Basilisks are survivors — she frequently has to be rescued from trouble of her own making. However she has one talent which makes it all worth it — a perfect memory. Being accident prone she is a trial on any expedition — she will open every door and falls over things frequently and loudly.

32f **Giraldo** would dearly like to take Fionn's place. He is aged 14, T2, ambitious and afraid of Grimling. He is also not nearly as good a thief as he thinks he is. Fionn has taken to sending him on risky missions — Giraldo thinks he is being honoured — and one day he may not come back.

32g-v The majority of the rest of the Basilisks are the children of the poor; the very young ones, **Tirri**, **Jasta**, **Poppy**, **Llorrlla**, **Renn** and **Bandsa**, are '0' level thieves or fighters; **Farda Khan**, **Brerro**, **Lutt**, **Markham**, **Starbrow** and **Jiv** are 1st level, **Zim**, **Farda Travent** and **Norden** are 2nd and **Greska** 3rd. They all use chains as their main weapon and daggers or slings for missiles.

Plotlines

1 The Basilisks are very useful to people planning robberies or attempting to solve mysteries. However unless the characters who approach them are very obviously tough, they may demand that they prove themselves worthy of being taken seriously by performing an initiation test.

2 The person who killed Grimling's mother may belatedly find out that he was recognised. He might arrange to frame Grim for some crime — perhaps the murder of a player character.

3 The Basilisks acquire a lot of stray scraps of information which they will try to sell; this is a very useful way of involving players in adventures.

4 The initiation test of a new recruit is the acquisition of an item belonging to a party member.

5 The party need to take Lucy with them to carry out a mission and she can get them into a lot of trouble.

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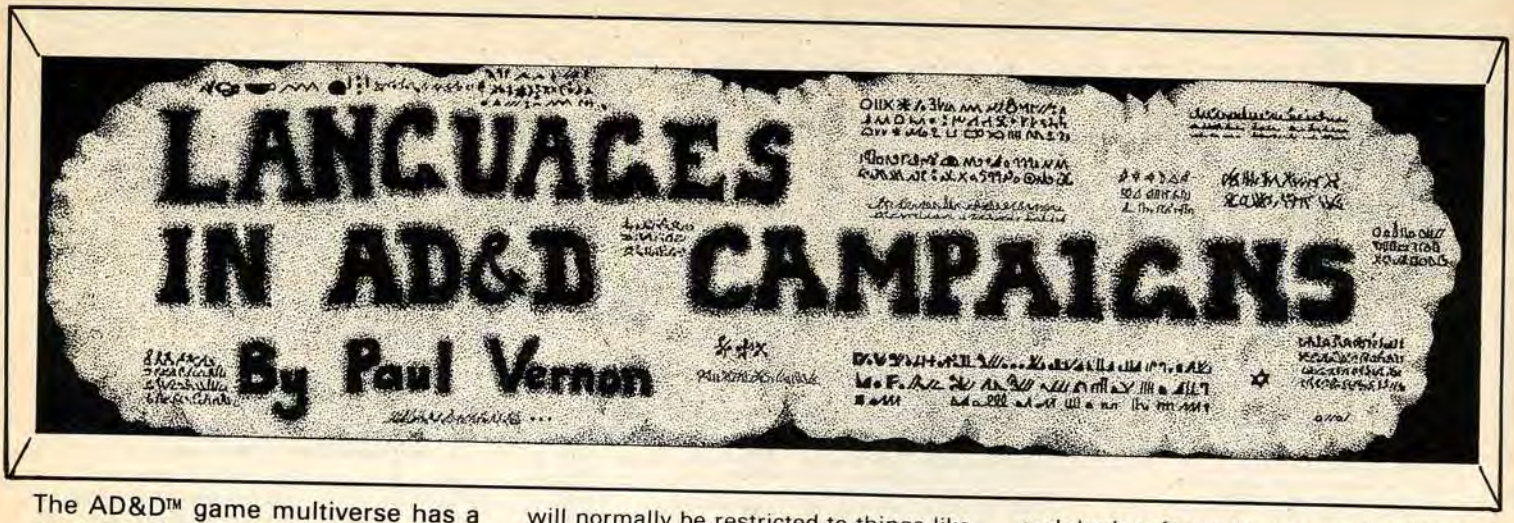

The AD&D™ game multiverse has a plethora of different tongues: racial languages from Brownie to Xorn; the secret language of druids, thieves, MUs and illusionists; the mysterious alignment languages, apparently only of use when some other form of communication has already established that only those of the same language are present to hear what is said; and there is, in addition, at least one other language implied (but never specifically mentioned) by the game mechanics.

In **Stirge Corner** last issue, Roger Musson made several suggestions as to how the existing system could be altered to be rather more manageable and believable. It is my intention to offer a few more radical ideas.

There are clearly two extreme ways of dealing with languages. At one end of the scale, they are seen as more or less of a barrier to interaction with monsters and NPCs (and hence to good role-playing), including all Official Languages whether they serve a useful purpose or not. At the other, there is virtually no attempt to deal with language at all; Common is a universal language spoken by every single creature that isn't clearly labelled *dense*.

When designing a campaign, it is up to individual DMs to decide what languages are spoken, where, and by whom they are used, and what areas of experience they cover. Some languages may be found to be redundant in a particular campaign, whilst others may need to be added if the campaign world is to be believable.

Speaking to Animals

Anybody trying to carry on an intelligent conversation with animals, be it a cleric or druid using a spell, or a gnome chatting with burrowers, should be sadly disappointed. Conversation with any creature of less than low intelligence (6 or less) will be very basic, and will not stray from the creature's immediate concerns. Usually, this will be restricted to feeding, fighting, flight and mating — indeed the same could well apply to less intelligent human characters!

Animals will not indulge in the passion for clarification that more intelligent creatures generally do, and their nouns will normally be restricted to things like 'bad plants' (inedible), 'good plants', 'plant-eaters', 'us-eaters', 'flyers', and so on. In addition, many creatures have only monochromatic vision, so the concept of colour will be totally beyond them. So, when asked about a red dragon, the only answer such a creature is likely to give will be a blank look, and though 'big flyer' might get some reaction, this could refer equally well to a giant owl or magic carpet!

As an added complication, animals will live strictly in the present, with little conception of the past or future. A good way of putting this across when DMing is to use only the present tense when talking on their behalf — 'Big Flyer goes that way, I not go. I hungry, you give I food.' In this way, the information that players manage to glean from animals will be incomplete and lacking a time reference. Players must take care not to rely on information gained in this way.

Speaking to Intelligent Creatures

There are literally hundreds of languages currently in use throughout our world, in addition to many others (Old English and Latin) which are no longer spoken even though written documents may survive. The same should also be true in a fantasy world, though on a necessarily smaller scale.

Languages will usually be restricted to specific areas and/or peoples, many of whom could co-exist in a fantasy campaign. Language is the glue which binds a culture together, and peoples with different cultures should form separate nations in a campaign setting. This not only applies to humans, as different groupings of dwarves, elves and humanoids could have cultures — and languages — differing from others of their race. A character able to speak goblin should find that in some places, this talent is valueless, as the goblins in this district have evolved an entirely different form of speech.

Generally, the culture's circumstances will dictate the things that can be easily communicated in the language. A nation of land-locked mountain dwellers would have few things to say about sailing ships, for example, and desert nomads would have little interest in forestry. Likewise, there should be many nuances and shades of meaning concerning things vital to a culture's survival that are difficult to pass on to outsiders, in the same way that eskimos have over twenty different words for snow.

NPCs, and indeed, player-characters themselves, will only learn those languages which will be of lasting use to them. Usually, this should initially be restricted to the language of their own nation, race and/or culture. Characters with a background that implies regular dealings of an international, inter-racial or inter-cultural nature, such as traders, diplomats, merchants — even innkeepers — will also have some knowledge of those languages necessary to fulfil their requirements.

Campaign Building

Clearly, there is an advantage in having one language that will allow player characters to communicate with the bulk of those they encounter. A 'common' tongue could be designated in a number of ways. If the campaign is centred on a large Empire which dwarfs its neighbours, its official language could be adopted as Common, as this would be the language used to conduct trade on all but the most parochial level. That empire might even have long disappeared, but the language could still be used by scribes and statesmen in successor states, in the same way as Latin was kept as the official language in most of the documents of dark- and middle-age Europe. Another parallel is the adoption by a number of multi-lingual African states of the language of their former colonial masters as the official one. A third alternative is that a 'mixed' *lingua franca* comes to serve an area with several native languages, simply because there is some point at which they all mingle freely. This, I would suggest, is the best model for the City League and that part of Pelinore around it.

Conversely, if your campaign has a number of equally powerful states, then Common should be taken to mean the language of each separate culture, serving the surrounding area. These should be as similar or as different as suits the circumstances of the area.

A Common tongue is useful to a campaign where the characters rove freely, but the DM should allow only those characters who have a use for it —

merchants, officials, scholars, other adventurers, etc — to speak it. The local language will be sufficient for most characters. Just how easy it is for the basics of one language to be learned by those who speak another is something that the DM must consider.

Many of the same ideas can be made to apply to the humanoid races. Each could benefit greatly from a Common of their own. This 'black speech' or 'dark tongue' could again be the language of some past or extant empire, or it could be the tongue for the most prevalent humanoids in your campaign, drawn from a time when they all lived together in one small geographic area. In this case, orcish, hobgoblin and possibly goblin would be the most likely candidates, although, once more, only the leaders and traders of the different humanoid races would be able to speak it fluently.

Specialist Languages

Where languages such as Thieves' Cant are concerned, there are two ways of handling them. In our own world's past, when thieves *did* use a secret language, this would hardly have been universal. An English thief would not have used the same argot as his Parisien counterpart, for example. The latter's 'street talk' would have been based in whole or in part on native French. So, in a fantasy campaign, there could be a large number of cants, each rooted in the language of the nation or race from which the thieves were mostly drawn, rooted to a specific area. Alternatively, where the Thieves' Guild has caused widespread communication between thieves from many different cultures, there might be one Cant as the 'common' tongue of the underworld.

Magical languages also cause problems. Illusionists, having learned their arcane tongue, can read and write it freely. Magic users, however, need the spell **read magic** to understand their magical script (though how they come to learn this spell in the first place, since it is presumably recorded in magical script itself, is never explained!). To resolve this problem, the language of MUs can be treated in the same way as that of illusionists (dispensing with the spells **read magic** and **write**) without altering the balance of the game. Knowledge of the language is insufficient to cast spells, as in order to impress the mystical symbols onto the mind of the spellcaster, the necessary mental exercises must be performed.

Bereft of the foundations of a sizeable and cohesive population to speak them, languages tend to die out. The same should be true in your campaign world. It is neither necessary nor believable to give each sub-species of a rare monster type a language of its own. Dragons are a case in point. Each of the ten variants given in the **Monster Manual** has its own language, though their populations are small and scattered. These could easily be merged into one Dragonstongue, spoken and understood by all varieties (with dialects retained by each for 'secret' conversation if required).

Since dragons are an ancient race, well-versed in magic use, this Dragonstongue could even be the mystical language learned by MUs, and indeed could be spoken by all other monsters using MU spells. An inherently magical language could also be the 'common' tongue for all illusion-casting monsters.

A similar procedure could be adopted for other closely-linked groups of monsters; all giants (including ogres, ettins and trolls perhaps) could speak Giantstongue, and all types of Naga could be deemed to speak a common language.

Speaking to the Gods

Speaking to gods will usually be restricted to clerics and druids, either while performing religious ceremonies or while praying for spells, etc. It is reasonable to expect that alignment tongues would be used for this purpose, and also for inscribing clerical and druidical scrolls. As things stand, this is plainly not the case. When a clerical scroll is found on an adventure, alignment of the writer is rarely given. As a result, a Lawful Good cleric can blithely use a scroll that a CE cleric has spent days inscribing. So what tongue is it written in?

A way of answering this, and of introducing a greater awareness of the importance of alignment, might be to consider alignment languages as entirely separate ways for clerics to communicate with others of their kind who share the same alignment. This will involve the DM in quite a bit of extra work when designing adventures with a strong element of 'godly' magic.

Alternatively, the DM could introduce a Godstongue, spoken by all clerics — and the gods themselves. This will be the language used in all religious ceremonies, and for clerical scrolls, whilst alignment languages are reduced merely to the correct response in ceremonies or actions dedicated to specific gods. Two Godstongues will be required: the tongue of the 'Old Gods' for Druids and that of the 'New Gods' worshipped by clerics proper. Where more than one pantheon of 'New Gods' is included in the campaign, each could have a Godstongue of its own. However, as soon as one starts to introduce divisions of this kind, one is back to the problem of having clerics only able to use scrolls written in the Godstongue of their choice, in the same way as they are unable to use druidical scrolls. In this latter case also, the use of more than one Godstongue renders alignment languages superfluous, and they can be discarded easily.

Character Languages

Once the languages used in a given campaign have been determined, the DM must decide which can be spoken by each character introduced for the first time, and which that character can learn by normal means.

All characters will speak the language of their native area and/or race, and those in border areas will often be bilingual. In addition, those characters worshipping a specific deity will know the correct responses (in Godstongue) in the appropriate religious ceremonies.

Characters will also know those languages needed to pursue their chosen calling. Druids will speak 'Old' Godstongue, clerics will speak one of the 'New' Godstongues, and MUs and illusionists will be fluent in their respective magical tongues. Thieves who are (or were) members of a guild will know the cant spoken by that guild — which may or may not be the same as that spoken in other guilds elsewhere.

The other languages, if any, which a character might have knowledge of will depend upon that character's background. Those from farming communities, who have probably never travelled more than ten miles from home before they commenced their training, will know no extra tongues. Well-educated characters, however, and those from mercantile backgrounds, will probably have some knowledge of Common and/or the official language, as will those with connections in government.

For campaign purposes, it is suggested that those languages bestowed by virtue of race in the **Players Handbook** be ignored. A dwarf whose family were a group of travelling masons, for example, would speak Dwarvish, Common, and have some knowledge of the areas where his family worked, but need not necessarily include among those orcish or kobold. The demi-human races are longer-lived, and therefore there should be some consideration given to their greater opportunity to learn, but characters of all types would only have knowledge of those languages they had a use for and/or been taught. They will be able to learn further languages as in the PHB, dependent on intelligence.

A sensible mix of believable languages helps to give a campaign world a much greater flavour, rather than those situations where every creature speaks the same language (like in Hollywood), or where there is a constantly increasing mess of obscure and little used languages. If knowledge of a language is limited, fluency in *any* tongue will be a valuable and sought after accomplishment, especially desirable to player-characters. Those taking the time and trouble to seek out teachers and learn new tongues will be at a considerable advantage in a wide range of situations, while for the DM the opportunities that come from having a party dependent upon a translator, possibly proving to be more than a little reluctant to pass on a certain piece of information, are well worth the effort.

Paul Vernon

A Knight to be KING

Seizing a crown in frp games

by Chris Felton

Dispel Confusion *in issue 10 was devoted to one question: a DM with 20th level characters (!) asked about running a widespread war which would probably arise as the characters simultaneously assassinated two powerful rulers. During the war, the player characters planned to take advantage of the confusion to occupy one or more of provinces and declare themselves kings. DC advised the DM to confine the action to palace coups to keep things on a manageable scale. This article is for characters in a pseudo-feudal fantasy campaign who want to be king.*

First, remember that a king, whatever title he chooses, is not an ordinary man (queens rarely rule in their own right in a militarised medieval milieu). He has the support of the Gods as well as his nobles and the force of tradition. To oust such an entrenched position requires more than just the death of the incumbent, otherwise any footloose adventurer could stroll into a palace, bump off the royal family, marry a handy beautiful princess, and live happily ever after. I can already hear the cries of 'But Conan did it!' He did — but Conan arrived in Aquilonia as an experienced mercenary general, joined the army with a rank of (approximately) colonel, rose to generalship in command of an elite unit fighting the Picts, and became a hero. An insecure king felt him a threat to the throne and tried to kill him, whereupon Conan's friends, including a powerful Count and former Treasurer of the realm, backed his claim. Even then he had to fight a civil war to overthrow the mad, despotic king.

The gods are pragmatists; they will back whoever has the power as long as that person doesn't try to meddle in religious affairs. If a King tries to suppress a particular God who is already established in the realm, he will find himself with a religious war on his hands. Otherwise, temples will preach the 'party' line: "Obey the King, for he is your temporal ruler (and demands less taxes if we publicly support him)."

The army will also act in favour of the status quo, having sworn an oath to serve the king. The word of military men is not easily broken. The nobles of the realm will be very reluctant to support any but the rightful king; they stand to lose everything if the coup fails. In effect, this means that the only royalty susceptible to overthrow are the extremely unpopular or mad ones: despots who are despised by their nobles and the Army alike. And in those realms, informers and secret police crawl in every piece of woodwork.

The first thing to do in seizing a throne is to:

Establish your Identity

To gain the support of the nobles, you must become one of them. No-one will even consider the possibility of a commoner reigning over them unless he is of high military rank and has the full support of the army, and then they are still hard to convince. Once someone becomes a noble and gains influence, people start to forget how he acquired his title. There are four main ways to gain such rank:

1) Be born with it: Since a young noble in line to inherit a title is rarely permitted to swan off adventuring but must remain to learn the art of governing, this will not apply to many player characters, although it is possible that a son with two surviving elder brothers was permitted to go adventuring, and it is remotely possible that both elder brothers will die (and not be raisable in games where this is a possibility), leaving the title to the PC.

2) Marry it: If you can find an unmarried noblewoman who has no brothers or elder sisters (again, in most cases it's a sexist world) and persuade her to marry you, you are in line for her father's title when it becomes vacant. Unfortunately, considering the penchant nobles have for ensuring the immortality of the family name by having massive broods of children, the noble family without sons is rare, and those which do exist have arranged marriages since the girls were infants. Only if the girl's fiancé has died will such a woman be available for marriage, and then the player character must compete with swarms of younger sons of other nobles. Even then, daddy will probably live (and hang on to the title) until he's 95!

3) Earn it: This takes a very great service for the realm; merely despatching a few dragons won't do, unless they were really tough. Rescuing the eldest princess from a Stygian sorceror's ring may earn you a Barony; if it was the eldest prince you may be able to scrape up an Earldom. Successful generals and admirals are usually ennobled on their retirement, most of them becoming barons or viscounts.

4) Buy it: This is very expensive, but easier than the other choices. For the would-be king, however, it presents one problem. During the negotiations an AD&D cleric will ask several questions while using a **detect lie** spell: 'Do you intend to fulfil all the duties of this office?' and so on, but one of the questions will be 'Have you any intention of using this position to overthrow the present king or his heirs?' — the same question they ask anyone who has successfully passed the selection procedure to transfer from the army to the royal guard. It's easier in systems other than AD&D, where the **detect lie** spell doesn't exist, but in all systems the magic-using classes will use whatever divination methods are open to them.

A title is expensive, but always for sale one way or another, as few realms have enough money in the Royal coffers. As well as swearing allegiance to the king, the nobility must pay their taxes to him (and I've yet to meet an adventurer who pays taxes), attend court whenever commanded, which can take up three months a year of the nobility's time, during which he cannot attend to his own affairs, and so on. They must also provide a number of men for the royal armies appropriate to their rank. Those with inherited titles have enough land and property to support the tithe of men (about 2% of the population on their lands) but landless nobles find it difficult to support their troops. It is very difficult to buy enough land to support a troop levy; even when it is available it costs 1500gp to buy a farm which will support one family of six, thus enough land to support one trooper will cost around 12,500gp in AD&D. As to the number of troops a noble is required to support, we have one figure to work from: in 1611 King James I set the price of a baronetcy, including land, at three years' pay for thirty soldiers. Since the land in question was recently conquered Irish land (and he was trying to encourage English immigration) we can assume that the price of the land was twice the price of the title, so a baronet was expected to support thirty troops in the King's service in addition to any forces (City Watch, local militia, etc) necessary to protect or subdue his subjects. From this we can derive the table below.

Astute readers may notice that the 576 platoons of a division cost about 60% more than 576 separate platoons would. This is because at each step of the pyramid of command the costs of officers, support groups, administration and so on, add 10% to the costs if the staff are honest (if they're not, make that 20%). Units may only be divided into different troop types one level below the top of the chain of command; an earl's regiment may contain one battalion of heavy cavalry alongside two of heavy foot (at a total cost of 155,654gp plus 10% officers etc: 171,219gp) but cannot include a battalion with one company of heavy cavalry, two of horse archers and one of light foot, although a viscount could command such a unit.

Incidentally, although a knight bachelor or knight commander are not subject to the law requiring them to supply troops, they are positions for sale (at 1250 and 1750gp respectively), but the recipients are then members of the king's armies and subject to the command of whichever military incompetent is in charge of the unit that the king decrees they ride with. Although technically members of the nobility, knights are not viewed as 'real' nobles by their superiors.

Precedence within the nobility depends on many things: age of title, landholdings, wealth, marriage alliances, and so on. Since most Frpgs are set in highly militarised societies, the quality of your troops is an important indicator of wealth and power; a baron with a company of heavy cavalry in his employ is superior to one with a mere pair of medium foot companies. To make a good impression the new noble must therefore invest in the best troop type he can afford.

Military Support Table

Rank	Unit required	Unit strength	Unit commander	Cost of rank
Baronet	Platoon	30 men	NCO	2,000gp
Baron	Company (2 platoons)	60 men	Lieutenant	4,000gp
Viscount	Battalion (4 companies)	240 men	Captain	16,000gp
Earl	Regiment (3 battalions)	720 men	Colonel	48,000gp
Count	Brigade (4 regiments)	2,880 men	Brigadier	200,000gp
Duke	Division (6 brigades)	17,280 men	General	1,000,000gp

Once the title has been purchased, the unit must be paid and their equipment maintained, the cost of which depends on the type of unit:

Troop type	Platoon	Company	Battalion	Regiment	Brigade	Division
Cavalry, heavy	8,748gp	19,246gp	84,680gp	279,446gp	1,229,562gp	8,115,114gp
Cavalry, light	4,761	10,474	46,086	152,085	669,175	4,416,559
Cavalry, med	6,927	15,239	67,053	221,276	973,615	6,425,857
Crossbow	2,565	5,643	24,829	81,936	360,520	2,379,432
Foot, heavy	3,666	8,065	35,487	117,106	515,269	3,400,779
Foot, light	2,112	4,646	20,444	47,466	296,849	1,959,205
Foot, med	2,655	5,841	25,700	84,811	373,170	2,462,921
Horse archers	3,903	8,587	37,781	124,677	548,581	3,620,633
Longbow	4,365	9,603	42,253	139,436	613,516	4,049,209
Shortbow	2,565	5,643	24,829	81,936	360,520	2,379,432

All figures are given for 1 year's maintenance and wages in AD&D gold pieces. 1 AD&D gold piece = 10 Runequest Lunars.

Having become one of the nobility, you must:

Prove Yourself

This is the long, difficult part of the seizing of a kingdom, or merely gaining influence within one. The newly-noble PC must forge alliances with all the existing nobles, becoming a popular noble of the realm with a reputation for honesty, justice, reliability, etc. In its initial stages, this involves throwing a lot of parties, some of them week-long affairs involving hunting, banquets, festivals, and so on. Later, you are an established figure on the social scene and you should be getting as many invitations as you used to send out, allowing you to cut down on the number of parties you host while you attend other people's. Since it is physically impossible to attend all the parties in the average kingdom you must be selective, going only to those where you can meet the nobles you most want to meet. No-one can be everyone's friend, and you must be selective in your friendships or you will be thought a crawler and no-one will be impressed with you — but don't alienate the people you're not cultivating: you may change your mind on their usefulness to you when you find out something about them later.

During this rise to influence you'll be spending a lot of time at parties, but if you spend all your time getting drunk and

ogling the dancing girls you'll be looked on as a boor, and avoided by all those you wish to cultivate. On the other hand, be careful to avoid the reputation as a bore, which is just as bad. Spend your time at these parties talking to the other nobility, sounding out their opinions, prejudices, alliances, and so on. You must learn how to oppose every policy with quiet, reasonable arguments, allowing yourself to be persuaded around to the speaker's point of view (agreeing with everyone is another way to be labelled a crawler, and allowing yourself to be argued into his viewpoint makes any noble feel that he is clever, which pleases him immensely).

Other sources of information are very valuable at this time: if you have contacts with the Thieves or Assassins Guild (your former adventuring partners, perhaps?) and can use them as a source of rumours and little-known facts about the nobles you're interested in, you have a great advantage over other nobles trying to advance their own causes. The same route can be used to disseminate rumours and tales (whether true or false) about you, or your opponents, to your advantage.

At the same time, you must prove yourself a military commander. The troops you support to pay for your title are not just window dressing: they've got to be used to repel foreign troops invading the land, to punish incursions by retaliatory attacks, to put down nobles who declare themselves independent or claim the throne, to secure the borders against smugglers and bandits, and so on. Normally, nobles allow their troop commanders to deal with the troops — that's what they're paid for, after all — and the only time they see them is when they perform ceremonial inspections, but if you want a good military reputation you must actually go out with them.

There are two ways of doing this: the active way, taking full command, or the noble's way, in which you declare yourself in full command but the orders you give at staff conferences were given to you an hour before by your troop commander. The higher your rank, the easier the noble's way is to get away with, as a baron has little function in large scale tactical decisions with a mere 60-100 troops, so his duties on the battlefield mainly consist of leading his men into the thick of the battle. Using the noble's way has the advantage that your troop commander has more battle experience than you (and I *am* talking to 20th level fighters who gained their levels in small group adventuring, which is totally different to real battle experience) and is therefore more likely to produce winning tactics. Its disadvantages are that even if no-one else notices, your officers will; as well as snarling up the chain of command when an important message is taken to the real commander (by those in the know) or to you (by those who aren't), the officers will know you are a fraud, and morale will suffer accordingly. The disadvantage of the active command choice, apart from the fact that you are right in the middle of the battle and therefore at risk, is that your lack of battle experience will cause you to issue ill-judged commands in the heat of the moment, which may lead to loss of men, battles, wars, or (more important!) reputations, and the morale of your troops will suffer through not having their regular commander in charge (commanding troops is a full-time job, and nobles don't do it except in short bursts, such as on the battlefield).

Now you've won a battle or three to establish your military genius (hopefully in a difficult combat, rather than the DM allowing you perfect ambush ground, perfect troop morale and communications, perfect supply routes, and an incompetent enemy) and established your political stance, it's time to:

Prepare Your Ground

By now, you know the factions within the kingdom and you must determine which policies and allies will maximise your support and influence. You must formulate your policies and stick by them; no longer can you be led to a different viewpoint by a persuasive speaker, you are now a firm, resolute, strong-willed and intelligent man. Those who don't support your ideas may be persuaded into doing so, but be very careful what you say at this point. If you are actively critical of the present king's policies the secret police will be on your track so fast you'll wish you had taken that group of adventurers to the Negative Plane after all. Kings are very careful about watching for subversives as there are dozens of nobles who would like to be king, so to escape notice you'll have to be very sharp and subtle.

Once you've let the world know your political ideas and decided who will support you, actively and tacitly, you must:

Establish Your Claim

Again, this must be done secretly, but it is more important as you are by now actively planning treason. Go to those supporters you can trust, and reveal that the time has come to oust the bloody-handed tyrant (or the spineless weakling who's dithering when the country needs a strong fist on the tiller of state) and install a firm, reasonably-minded monarch: you. Your best hope of allies is among the disaffected: the bastards, the younger sons, ambitious lesser nobles. The less popular the monarch, the more you can risk in recruiting allies.

There are some things which you must remember about persuading them. Never promise more than you can afford — the royal treasury may be rich, but there is a reason for that, as a king needs large funds to cover the turnover of the kingdom's expenses, and you'll need more than the present king; you must add the policies that you are committed to, to the present king's expenses. Promise them land if you must, but only from the estates of those whom you are certain will fight to the death in defence of the present king, for if you take land from a neutral noble to give to one of your supporters, all the neutral nobles will fear they are next, and band together to oppose you.

Never approach anyone whose support is uncertain, as a single mistake will put the Secret Police on your tail and all your supporters will swing beside you. Never allow yourself to be unguarded — kings reward the killers of subversives well, and a noble who supports your position in theory may well think that his lot under the present king will be improved if he presents the Secret Police with a challenger to the throne...

If at any time you realise that the Secret Police are on your tail, get out of the country. From the outside of a country you can raise an army and bring it to challenge the king, but inside a country the king can always raise more troops than you. Even your pledged supporters won't help you in that situation, but will do as the king tells them.

Whether you got your supporters pledged without incident or whether your agents had to finish the task as you raised an army in exile, the next thing you must do is:

Depose the King

If you can still operate within your target kingdom, assassination is the best policy for removing the present king. Although the D&D/AD&D systems regard assassination as evil this should not worry you, whatever your alignment, as the deposing of a king is a bloody business; he and everyone in line for the throne must be killed to secure the claim of the new monarch. The more public your original challenge to the king, the better he will be able to defend himself, and the more blood spilt. If he becomes aware of your forthcoming rebellion, his security will be far tighter than he could normally live with, and the assassination option is closed. You must take to the field and, using your troops, those of your supporters whose land your troops control (otherwise the Royal Army will destroy their property and kill them), and the mercenaries your cash has hired, you must destroy the Royal Army. Once you've done that, you must catch and kill the king and his heirs before they get away to plan a comeback.

Congratulations! You are now king, and can enjoy it as soon as you've paid off your mercenary troops and got them out of the country to prevent them turning outlaw, paid off your supporters, persuaded the neutrals to support you, come to an arrangement with the supporters of the old king, put down the bandits who've taken advantage of the civil war, arranged food for the villages whose crops were destroyed as battle raged, repair the breaches in the walls of the cities you've taken, set up a new government and secret police, rebuilt the army after its recent losses, set up diplomatic connections with foreign governments.....

Chris Felton

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As reviewed in **IMAGINE** 18

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The Multi-Character Game by Carl Sargent

In a DM's D&D® campaign, each player may have a 'stable' of characters, running different ones in different adventures in that world — so, while a player's cleric is consulting a sage and his MU is going through an **enchant an item** routine, his fighter takes part in the newest adventure. However, AD&D and D&D rules both permit a single player to play more than one character in the same adventure at the same time. I shall call this the multi-character game (MCG) and, having played the AD&D game this way for some years, I know it has major advantages over the traditional one-player/one-character-at-a-time game. The problems with the MCG can be overcome in various ways, which I'll describe.

The major advantage of the MCG for players is extra involvement — they get to play different alignments, races, classes at the same time. There's a better chance of having a continually adventuring character with really good ability scores; of getting an interesting magic item for at least one character early in the game; a better chance of playing the favourite character class. Anyone who has ever played a 1st-level MU who hasn't yet learned the **sleep** spell will appreciate this extra involvement!

There are three avoidable problems associated with this. First, certain combinations will clash; it will not, for example, be possible to play a paladin and a 6-Charisma half-orc CN thief together. It is best to play characters of similar alignment and get extra variety and involvement from playing different classes and races. This may be a problem if you're trying to play existing characters which are very different; it's best to start the MCG with newly-rolled, 1st-level characters, keeping the need for compatibility in mind. Further, the MCG is really not a game for chaotics; with exceptions (such as a druid, a special case in my view) the LG/LN/NG triad of alignments is the best to choose from, and arguably good players prefer those alignments anyway.

The second problem is that a player may have his characters co-operate with each other preferentially; even if by reason of race, alignment, religion etc they shouldn't behave like this. Each character that a player has must be played as an individual. The third problem is that a player may fail to develop the persona of his weakest character and, conversely, may treat his strongest/best-liked character too well. For example, players may divide magic items gained between themselves as players and then give them all to their favourite character, even when it's clear that this isn't the best or fairest division between the characters.

A good DM can avoid these problems. Discussing them in advance with the players will help if they're good players — and bad players will spoil any kind of game, after all. One request I've found useful is to get players to write me a couple of pages on the history, family, skills (if any), likes, dislikes, and personality of every player they roll up — which helps to develop all the personae. A DM can create extra interest in a 'weak' character by leaving a magic item only useable by that character — a nice twist on this is to provide an item which has several minor magic powers, of which one is available immediately and the others gained one per level of experience gained by the character. The player looks forward to this — what next? — and his weak character is now the centre of attention. Lastly, if a player is heaping all magic items on a single character, a ring which drains all permanent magic items completely will teach a sharp lesson. Putting a **magic mouth** on it, programmed to say 'That'll teach you to be greedy' when the ring is put on may be a bit unsubtle, but the lesson will be learned.

One advantage of the MCG for everyone is in the practicalities of play. It's much easier to arrange game sessions at times to suit everyone if only three or four players, rather than seven or eight, are involved. Also, because every player knows his presence is crucial — the game can't go on if two or three characters are missing — there are fewer last minute 'I'm sorry, I really can't make it tonight' phone calls. And, while melee play can take longer because each player has to 'call' for more than one character, debates about strategy and tactics, encounters in taverns, and all the non-'hack-n-slay' aspects of the game move much faster. There are fewer people all trying to have their say at the same time. Not the least practical advantage is that a small and isolated group of players can play a good campaign in an MCG!

From my experience, the game atmosphere is much more fun in an MCG. Shy, inexperienced or non-pushy players don't get squeezed out of discussion as easily as in the normal game, where maybe one or two dominant players in a large group call the shots. The dominant players in an MCG take more care to consult with everyone (and it's easier when there is a managable number of players to consult with) because every player is a major factor in the game, running several characters. Because the group of players is small, the atmosphere is more friendly, intimate, co-operative and supportive.

There are two more major advantages for players. First, you have chances to do things which can't be done in the ordinary game — like play brothers fighting side by side, cousins, or even twins (just imagine the fun you can have with that when one of them is accused of some crime or other by the local judiciary...). Whole families can adventure together! Finally, the biggest bonus of all. When the dire day comes, and the resurrection roll is failed,

the pain is lessened if members of the burial party include other characters run by the same player.

The MCG does mean more work for the DM, however. While you won't have a roomful of people all screaming their melee round actions at you together, you will have to keep an eye on how characters are co-operating and, if the players are abusing the privileges the MCG gives them, discuss it with them. The one problem which a wise DM might foresee, and dread, is the 'unshared knowledge' problem. What if one character knows something, or has some secret aims or goals, which other characters played by the same player shouldn't know about? It might be thought that this is a major drawback with the MCG, but in my experience this is totally untrue. Let's consider this carefully.

One type of confusion which may arise is when a player makes mistakes about certain skills or abilities his characters have. Maybe his thief discusses something in elven with an NPC whereas, in fact, it is his MU who can speak elven and not his thief! A minor problem, but in fact it gives the DM an excellent opportunity. The DM can pull the player off to one side (and that's so much easier when there are only two or three players) and point out the mistake. This gets the player used to the fact that the DM often takes them aside to mention relatively minor points — and that goes a long way to dealing with the second problem, which is a major one.

What happens when a character is affected by a **charm** or **magic jar** spell, or insanity, or is killed off and replaced by a doppelganger? In the last two cases, particularly, the effects can be long-term and affect an adventure in many ways. The DM must take the player aside when necessary and tell him; and, because the other players are now used to being taken aside over lesser matters, this won't raise suspicion. So, characters played by other players may in fact be less suspicious, and react more 'naturally', than in the ordinary game! A surprising one-up for the MCG.

The problem remains of how the other characters run by that player will behave. When he takes the player aside, the DM must brief the player on what he expects from the affected character, and the other characters, run by that player. And, in my experience, what happens is that the player tends to play his other characters slightly dumber that they might be expected to behave in order to avoid appearing to know too much. This may be because my players are good players and want to play fair, which reinforces a previous point; the MCG won't be abused by good players, and poor players will spoil any type of game. The problem may be greatest with an inexperienced player, and here the DM must help the player when discussing events and reactions with him on his own. The DM must be fully prepared under these conditions.

For players and DMs considering the MCG, I can suggest some practical hints. A good set-up involves four players, each of whom plays three characters in the campaign, but only plays two of them together in the same individual adventure. Adventuring should be arranged so that, over a series of adventures, each character takes part in approximately the same number. If necessary, the DM can arrange this by taking characters out of individual adventures by making them consult with sages, run errands for their high-level MU masters (to whom low-level MUs are apprenticed), using conscription for an uneventful tour of duty on border patrol with the Royal Army, and so on. Indeed, these time-outs may be increasingly necessary for players (magical research, **enchant an item** jobs, etc) as characters gain higher levels, and they can have their characters do important things off-stage while their other characters get on with the action.

As the campaign progresses, a major advantage of the MCG may emerge. If a character dies, the player has a replacement; if the replacement isn't the right class to keep a balance, other players characters can be shuffled around to keep a balanced party. With the balanced-adventure MCG, so that all characters are about the same level, this kind of replacement will always be possible. In the ordinary game, this may not be so; even with a stable of characters, replacements of the right level may not be available. The loss of a high-level character in the ordinary game may cripple a player; let me give an example from my experience. In a campaign that has lasted four years, I have just lost (forever) my 8th level paladin. Mercifully, I had a 'spare' 8th level LN fighter to replace her. I do not have a worthwhile replacement character in any other DM's campaign; rolling up a new 1st level character would be pointless in a campaign where character levels 8-14 are involved, and rolling up a new high-level character makes a mockery of the game. If I were playing the conventional game, I would not be able to continue in this campaign — after four years, with the end in sight! This would be absolutely crushing. For DMs who like epic sagas, the MCG is the only game to play!

A final point — some players may feel that non-human multi-class characters offer the extra diversity and involvement the MCG does. Not so; such characters progress slowly, they are vulnerable, having fewer HPs than their faster-progressing single-class counterparts, they can only do one thing at a time, certain combinations aren't possible, and the character is of but one race. A pity; I know a NG gnome thief and LG dwarven fighter who get on really well! And, most important, you still have nothing left when the Grim Reaper decides to affect your resurrection shock roll...

The MCG in my experience is faster, friendlier, more co-operative, more exciting and more involved than the ordinary AD&D or D&D game. With good players (and what game is worthwhile without them?), it is the best game to play in, or to DM. And that's a promise.

Carl Sargent

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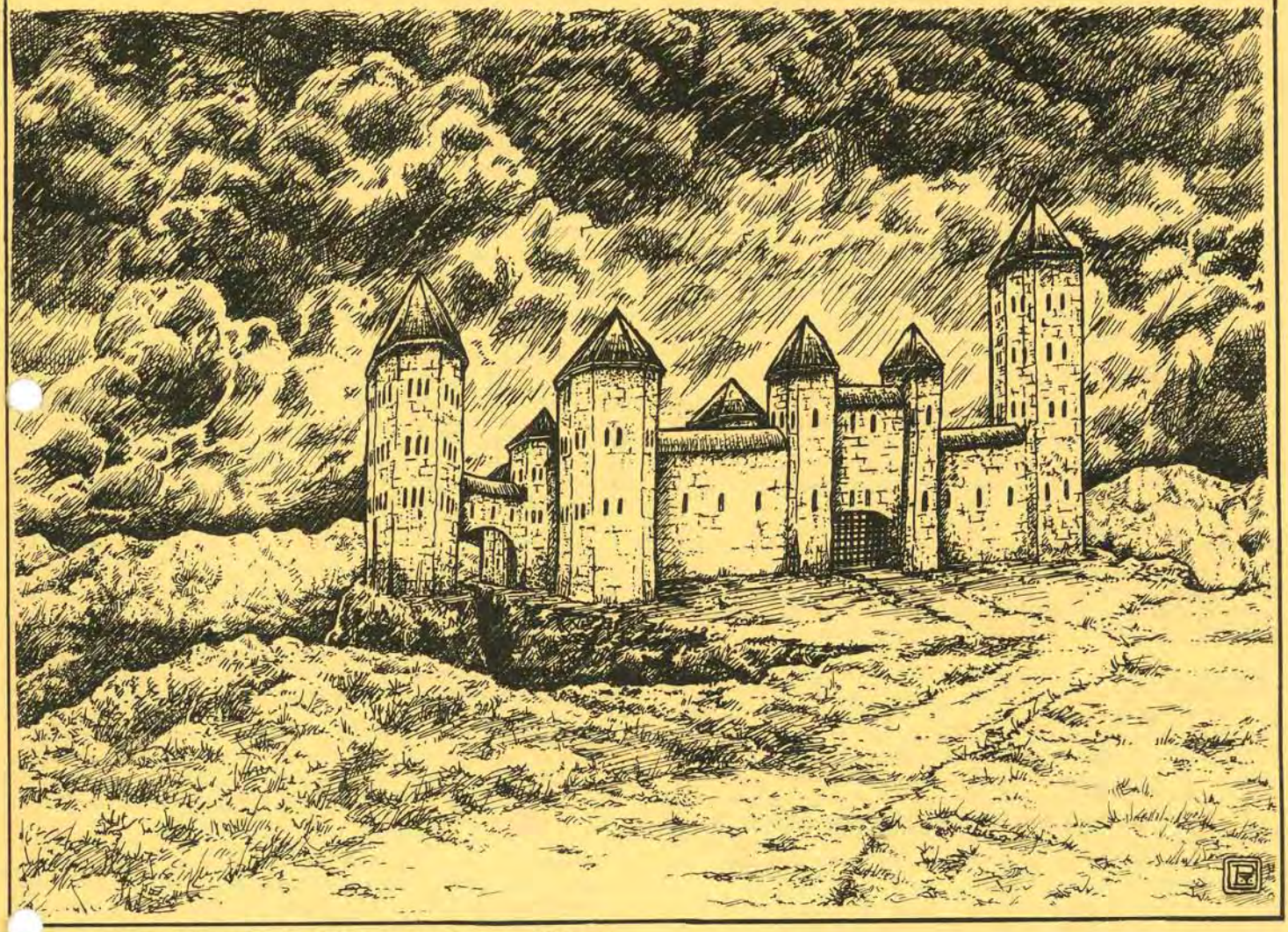
Im 23 D&D Level 6-9 No 4-6

The Shedu's Hall

by Matthew Parker



This is a D&D® mini-module for 4-6 characters between 6th and 9th level. About 32 character levels in total will provide a sufficient challenge for most parties. If you intend running an adventurer please stop reading here. The rest of the information is for the Dungeon Master (DM) alone.

Dungeon Master's Notes

The Dungeon Master will need access to copies of the Basic and Expert Sets, and may find a copy of the Companion Set useful (but not essential) in running the adventure — particularly the unarmed combat rules and the War Machine.

The following abbreviations are used in addition to the standard:
B — D&D Dungeon Masters Rulebook; Ex — D&D Expert Rulebook; Com — D&D Dungeon Masters Companion Rulebook.
THACO = To Hit Armour Class Zero. This is the roll on 1d20 needed by a creature to hit an opponent with AC 0. In most cases, the roll needed to hit other classes = THACO minus AC.

DM's Background

This adventure takes place at a specific point on the world of Pelinore — the **IMAGINE** magazine game world. Although specific and general references are made to places on Pelinore, the module is playable in any setting providing there is a mountain pass some two or three days hard travelling from the nearest town or city.

Shedu's Hall has an unconventional structure — and is an unconventional adventure. There are few encounter areas — the information is presented below as a series of events that happen over a week long period and a set of Non-Player Characters for the adventurers to meet. Unlike many adventures, the lives of the NPCs will carry on around the adventurers — only as Zorastin's plotting moves towards its conclusion will things obviously take a turn for the worse.

The History of Shedu's Hall

If you leave the City League by the eastern gate and take the road past the New City — that runs a little south of east — you pass through the town of Wicbold in the County of Cerwyn. Beyond the town the force of County law stops, and the road becomes a track through the pleasant grasslands that gradually rise and become wooded before the track enters the Sarpath Peaks, goes through the narrow gorge of Cirbell Pass and drops down into the wild steppe country beyond.

At the top of the Cirbell Pass stands a castle, the Shedu's Hall. Built long ago to provide travellers with a haven in bad weather and a measure of protection, this crumbling pile of stone still keeps the Pass open by virtue of its presence.

Allegedly named after the mythical winged creature of great goodness and kindness that supposedly built the first tower, Shedu's Hall first served as a fortress base for suppressing the hill tribes of goblins and other creatures, as a watch-station for the road patrols and as a heliograph relay station. However, over the years the tribal raiders were

driven away and the original purposes of the Hall ceased to matter. The fortress was forgotten by most people, save for an occasional traveller glad to shelter within its walls in a winter storm. Shedu's Hall began to fall into disrepair, and as it did so it slipped even further from the thoughts of ordinary men.

Yet within its walls the inhabitants of the Shedu's Hall lived on, now deprived of contact with the outside world, ignorant of it, and glad to be so for the most part. The original Masters of the Hall, the Nutgoblin family, became more idiosyncratic with each generation, until the present Master, Carilien, ennobled himself and the family, adopting the title of 'Earl' for himself and 'Countess' for Selculie, his wife (to keep her in her proper place) in the process.

The other occupants of the Hall are happy to go along with the Earl's new-found nobility. The few servants know nothing of the world beyond the hills that they can see from the towers and travellers' tales (which are never believed anyway). The mercenaries who serve as guards are content with the money and slack discipline they receive. Balmostin, the guard captain, sees the defence of the Hall as his sole duty, and Zorastin, the children's tutor, apparently wants nothing more than a sinecure which gives him the chance to write his *History of the World*.

Only Irmo, the Earl's eldest son, stands apart from the people of Shedu's Hall — but then he is supposed to be a little strange....

Getting into the Adventure

How the player characters arrive at Shedu's Hall is up to the DM. It is not somewhere they would be directed to as a likely place for an adventure — most NPCs the adventurers are likely to meet will be unaware that it even exists. Ideally, the player characters should 'stumble across' the castle during another — apparently more important — adventure.

For example, the adventurers could have been hired as escorts for a merchant caravan. Separated from their charges during a thunderstorm, they can then discover Shedu's Hall as a likely place for shelter from the weather, at least until it improves enough for them to rejoin the caravan. From thereon, events will follow the course detailed below.

Sequence of Events

The events given below are not a complete list of the doings of all the inhabitants in Shedu's Hall. Mundane, everday activities — such as the servant's and mercenaries' working practices — have been ignored. For the most part, the NPCs will just get on with their lives, spending their time as they always do. The following list gives the unusual occurrences that have happened recently and will happen during the player character's stay at the castle. The adventurers need not be told about all the events that take place.

The Recent Past:

Two years ago: Carilien ennobles himself. Zorastin arrives at Shedu's Hall and acquires the post of tutor. Irmo enters the West Tower for the first time — and becomes increasingly isolated from the rest of the castle's inhabitants.

18 months ago: Zorastin begins to plot the overthrow of the household and discovers a malevolent spirit — the Gebbeth (see below) — that lurks in catacombs beneath the house. He also discovers further allies in the shape of a recently arrived goblin tribe.

Three months ago: Stalfan, one of the mercenaries, disappears while on night duty — Balmostin assumes that he has deserted. In actual fact he has fallen victim to the Gebbeth (see below), as it needs a material body to advance its schemes.

Two months ago: Earl Carilien's behaviour starts to show signs of deterioration with occasional bouts of insomnia and an evident fear that he is being haunted by something.... Over the next two months these symptoms become more frequent and severe as the Gebbeth continues to assault his sanity, but they also become an accepted part of castle life.

The Present:

Day 1: The player characters arrive at Shedu's Hall. The DM should time this arrival so that it occurs as darkness is falling, and during a thunderstorm if this is possible.

Day 2: In the morning Tossin finds one of the adventurer's horses dead in its stall, completely drained of blood. During the night Zorastin has taken the animal's blood as one of the ingredients of a **potion of animal control** he is concocting.

Just after moonrise a large white dragon (Irmo in dragon form) leaves the West Tower and flies south over the Steppes. At dawn it returns.

During the night, Earl Carilien suffers 'one of his attacks' — the Gebbeth is exerting its influence upon him again.

Day 3: Zorastin — untypically — spends all day lecturing the children on *The Realities of Politics*.

Day 4: Morganstern appears outside Zorastin's tower for the first time since the adventurers arrived (unless he has indulged in a bit of thievery). He takes a walk around the walls and disappears within the tower once more.

Day 5: Carilien has an attack during the day while exercising his horse in the courtyard. He is carried to his bed. Later that evening he rises and goes down to the family crypt where he vanishes into the shadows.

During the night Zorastin moves a small detachment of goblins into the outer gatehouse and posts them on the deserted second floor.

Day 6: Zorastin's plans finally reach their conclusion.

At dawn the Earl is found in the chapel, paralyzed and apparently cl[illegible] to death. Selculie refuses all aid, but by midday Carilien seems to have made a total recovery — he has finally been overcome by the Gebbeth.

At dusk Zorastin's goblin allies finally attack Shedu's Hall in an attempt to drive out all the humans — including Zorastin.

The Castle

The buildings of Shedu's Hall are not described in any detail (cf Pelinore buildings). Most of the structure is sound, but it has not been looked after for many years. The stonework is dirty and crumbling, and from the outside the Hall appears to be deserted, except for the occasional flicker of torchlight from arrow slits and windows.

The rooms that are not in constant use by members of the household — the smaller towers, the gatehouses and parts of the West Tower are in a poor condition, largely covered in dust, rat droppings and cobwebs. Furniture in these rooms is richly appointed, but spoiled by years of neglect and exposure to damp.

The rooms that are still used are also richly appointed, and slightly better kept. There are few monetary treasures within the Hall — the mercenaries have 2d%gp each, Zorastin has a locked coffer containing 6000gp and Carilien has three chests containing a mixed selectio[illegible] coins worth 10,000gp in his room. In addition to his spell books, Zorastin has the following magical items in his tower: a **potion of undead control**, a **wand of cold** (6 charges) a **ring of water walking**, a **shield +3**, 3 **arrows +2** and a scroll carrying the spells **charm person**, **wizard lock** and **dispel magic**.

Most of the treasure in the hall is in the form of paintings, inlaid panels, rich tapestries, furniture, books, ceremonial clothing, weaponry, armour and the like. It is up to the DM to determine the exact value and placement of these items, but he or she should bear in mind that no single item should be worth more than 750gp and all should be bulky and difficult to transport.

The courtyards give an impression of disorganised neatness. The outer courtyard is largely given over to a vegetable patch and a chicken run. The stables contain six horses, all in excellent condition.

The inner courtyard is dominated by the presence (and smell) of a pigsty with fourteen pigs. The largest of these, Chitterlings, is actually a polymorphed fighter, Narsus Fandango. Not unnaturally, he is unenthusiastic about his likely fate on the dinner table, and if anyone casts **dispel magic** on him he will be suitably grateful — offering his services for up to a year, after he has attempted to kill Zorastin.

Narsus Fandango: AC 9; F6; hp 32; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1; D by weapon; Save as F6; ML 10; AL N; XP 275; THACO 15; S 16 (+2), I 12, W 10, D 12, C 14, Ch 10
Pig form: AC 7; HD 4; hp 24; MV 180' (60'); #AT 1 gore; D 2-12; Save as F4; ML 6; AL N; XP 75; THACO 16.

Non-Player Characters

Earl Carilien: AC 3 or 9; F10; hp 58; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1; D by weapon; Save as F10; ML 8; AL L; XP 900; THACO 10; S 14 (+1), I 4 (12), W 9, D 12, C 5 (12), Ch 16 (+1); wears normal (moth-eaten) court robes or **chainmail +2** and uses a **longsword +2**.

'Earl' Carilien is the fourteenth Master of Shedu's Hall, and by far the strangest — although Irmo has yet to come into the title. Deciding to become an Earl was one of his minor eccentricities; other escapades have involved the entire population of the castle in searches for Truth (after all, it has to be hiding somewhere!), attempts to bottle moonbeams, construction of elaborate codes and ciphers through the use of crypt dust and making mothballs from real moths.

Carilien has been under attack by the Gebbeth for more than two months. To begin with he was able to resist the Gebbeth, but he has gradually been worn down — hence the reduced ratings for constitution and intelligence. Everyone has attributed his bouts of insomnia and 'attacks' to his madness, and as a result Carilien has had to fight the Gebbeth on his own. Carilien's behaviour varies from the lucid and clear to screaming madness — often in minutes. Cloaks and hooded capes reduce him to a state of abject terror, as do the dark and the smell of soil. When he suffers one of his attacks he is given to shouting "Keep away, Madness!" and "Come no closer, nemesis of my soul!". Selculie has him confined in his bedroom during these bouts, and only Leas makes any attempt to help him.

Should — as is most probable — the Gebbeth take over Carilien all his symptoms of madness will disappear, save for a degree of amnesia as the Gebbeth makes itself at home in Carilien's mind.

Irmo Hyarmentir: AC 2 or 8; F7; hp 58; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1; D by weapon; Save as F7; ML 12; AL N; XP 1250; THACO 14; wears white dragonskin armour (AC 3 and +2 saving throw to all cold based attacks) doublet and hose (with an elaborately stitched dragon motif) and uses the longsword Wyrmsclaw (see below); S 15 (+1), I 15, W 13, D 14 (+1), C 16 (+2), Ch 12.

Irmo is the eldest son of Carilien and Selculie and heir to the Hall, as well as the only one of their early children to survive to adulthood. At an early age Irmo had what he terms 'an enlightenment' — a voice calling to him and telling him of the ancient dragonlords of Shedu's Hall. Irmo spent many hours in the West Tower, studying in the rotting library of his ancestors. Eventually he discovered a series of tomes, grimoires and scrolls that gave him the powers the voice had promised. Irmo now spends most of his time in the West tower, emerging every now and again to take meals in the Great Hall or kitchen. He is outwardly friendly, but rather aloof.

As a result of becoming a dragonlord Irmo now has the powers listed below. Only Zorastin has more than an inkling that Irmo has the following abilities:

Irmo can **polymorph** into a white dragon once per day.

Irmo, in white dragon form: AC 3; HD 6**; hp 48*; MV 90' (30') or Flying 240' (80'); #AT 3; D 1-4/1-4/2-16; Save as F7; ML 12; AL N; XP 725; THACO 14; B28; once Irmo suffers 48 hit points of damage in this form he reverts to his human shape; spells — **sleep, charm person, shield**.

Irmo can use a white dragon's breath weapon in both dragon and human form (causing a maximum of 48 points of damage), but is limited to using it three times a day, regardless of his form when breathing. He is completely immune to all cold-based attacks.

Irmo can summon a white dragon (identical statistics to those above) once per day and cast **charm monster** on any dragon once per day.

In human form Irmo always carries Wyrmsclaw, an intelligent (Int 14, Ego 9) Neutral **longsword +2/+4 vs dragons**. Wyrmsclaw confers a +3 saving throw on all fire, cold and electrical attacks upon its bearer, and can also speak all dragon tongues. Futhermore, the sword can detect the presence of gold, precious metals and gems at a range of 60'.

Irmo has two **potions of fire resistance** hidden in the West Tower. If Zorastin's plan comes to fruition and Irmo is given the chance he will drink one of these potions, summon his dragon ally and **polymorph** himself into a white dragon.

Countess Selculie: AC 7; HD 1; hp 4; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1; D by weapon; Save as Normal Human; ML 6; AL N; XP 5; THACO 19; **ring of protection +2, bodkin** (dagger) **+1** (D 2-5).

'Countess' Selculie is Earl Carilien's wife. Because of Carilien's occasional bouts of illness she is officially in charge of the Hall, but she leaves much of the management to Balmostin. She will welcome the player characters to the Hall and ask them of their adventures. Selculie knows that Carilien is under attack by the Gebbeth, but — because she does not care for Carilien and hopes to escape from the monotony of Shedu's Hall to the bright lights of the City — she will not mention this to another soul. She honestly believes that Zorastin and Morganstern are good and kind — she is also a terrible judge of character.

Castimir & Milia: AC 9; HD 1; hp 1; MV 120' (40'); #AT nil; D nil; Save as Normal Human; ML 7; AL N ; XP 5; THACO n/a.

The youngest surviving children of Carilien and Selculie, Castimir (age 9) and Milia (age 6) spend most of their time in the nursery. They take their meals and lessons there, and also sleep in the chamber. Neither child likes Gladeis and they will take any opportunity to upset the nurse — in the past this has included leaving a rat in her bed and dumping a bucket of water over her while she was having an amorous meeting with one of the mercenaries. Castimir and Milia quite like Zorastin — he rarely teaches them, preferring to set them lessons while he works in his tower. Milia knows that Zorastin's other name is Dweomerdabbler.

Balmostin: AC -2; F8; hp 40; MV 90' (30'); #AT 1; D by weapon; Save as F8; ML 11; AL L; XP 650; THACO 12; S 15 (+1), I 12, W 15, D 14 (+1), C 13, Ch 18; wears **platemail +2** and uses a **shield +1** and a **war hammer +2**.

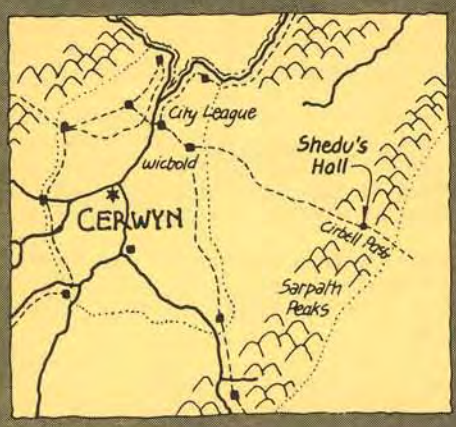
Balmostin is the captain of mercenaries, and very loyal to the Nutgoblin family. It is solely due to this loyalty that Balmostin has not left Shedu's Hall to seek a better position more suited to his talents. Loyalty has also resulted in a partial blindness to the truth — because Selculie approves of Zorastin and Morganstern, Balmostin also does so, despite his (well-founded) misgivings about the men.

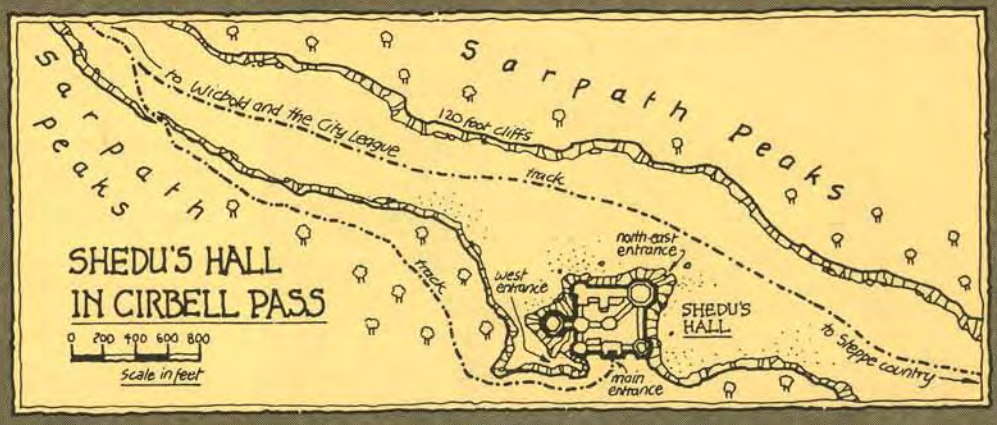
11 mercenary guards: AC 2; F4; hp 20 each; MV 90' (30'); #AT 1; D by weapon; Save as F4; ML 7; AL N; XP 75; THACO 19; the mercenaries have average abilities. All are equipped with plate mail armour, shields, longswords, a second weapon such as a dagger or axe. They also have access to crossbows, spears and battle axes.

The mercenaries are an ill-disciplined lot for the most part, but loyal to Balmostin and Carilien. They spend as little time as possible in training or on duty, and even at night no more than one of the mercenaries will be on duty, usually patrolling the walkway between the chapel and the inner gatehouse. As a group the mercenaries do not take an interest in the other inhabitants of the castle. They are generally insulting to anyone who has not — in their eyes — proved competent.

Zorastin (Dweomerdabbler): AC 6*; MU11; hp 20; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1; D by weapon; Save as MU 11; ML 9; AL C; XP 1900; THACO 15; S 10, I 18, W 12, D 16 (+2), C 10, Ch 16; wears a **ring of protection +1**, a **ring of regeneration**, and, if combat is likely, a **displacer cloak**.

Zorastin's books contain the following spells (those he normally memorises are marked with an asterisk):
1st level: all spells in books, usually memorises **darkness, magic missile** (x2) and **sleep**.
2nd Level: all spells except **continual light** and **ESP** in books, usually memorises **mirror image, phantasmal force** and **web**.
3rd level: **Dispel magic*, fire ball, haste, lightning bolt*, protection from normal missiles*** and **water breathing**.
4th level: **Charm monster, confusion*, hallucinatory terrain, ice storm/wall***, and **wizard eye***.
5th level: **Animate dead, hold monster***.
6th level: **Lower Water**.


City League
Shedu's Hall
wicbold
CERWYN
Cirbell Pass
Sarpath Peaks


Sarpath Peaks
to Wicbold and the City League
120 foot cliffs
track
Sarpath Peaks
track
SHEDU'S HALL
IN CIRBELL PASS
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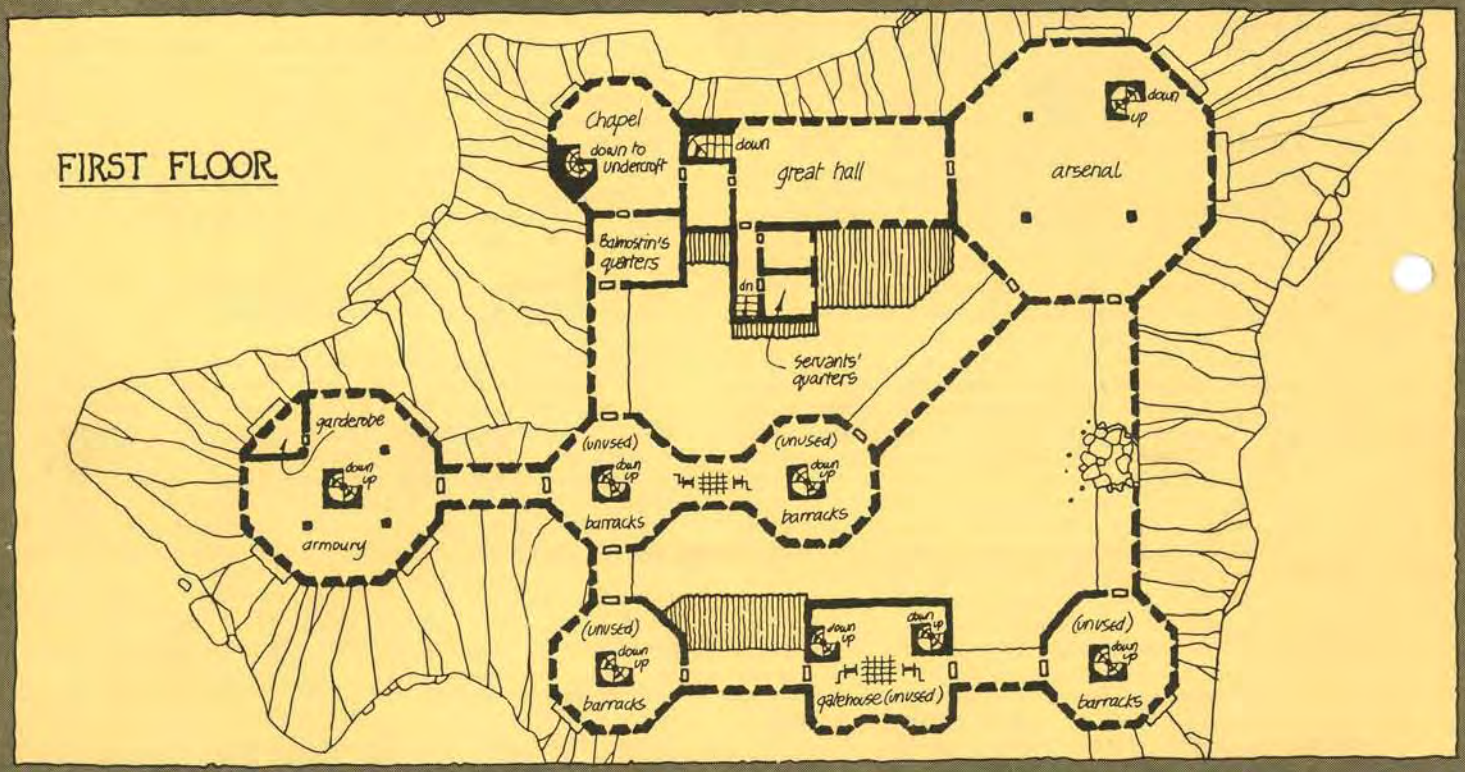
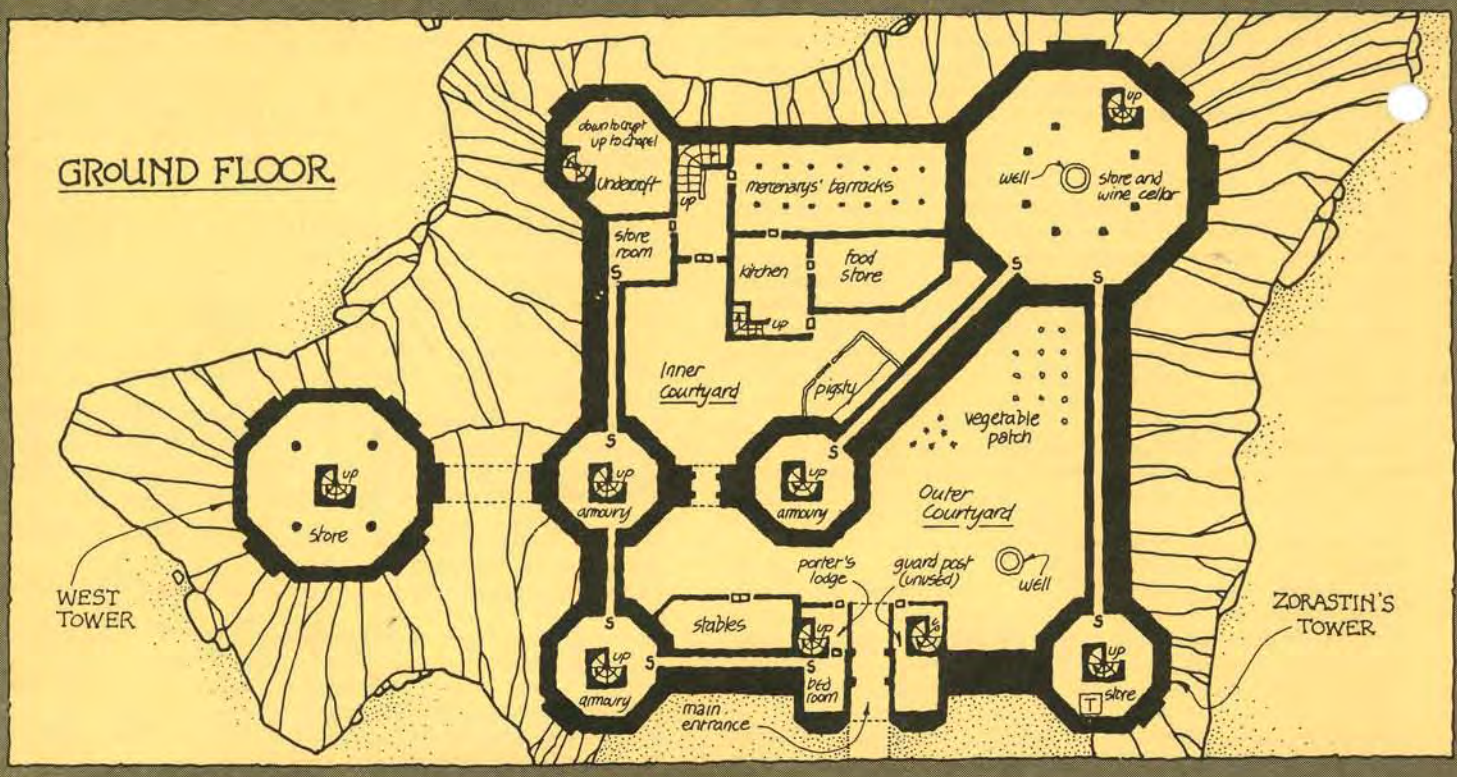
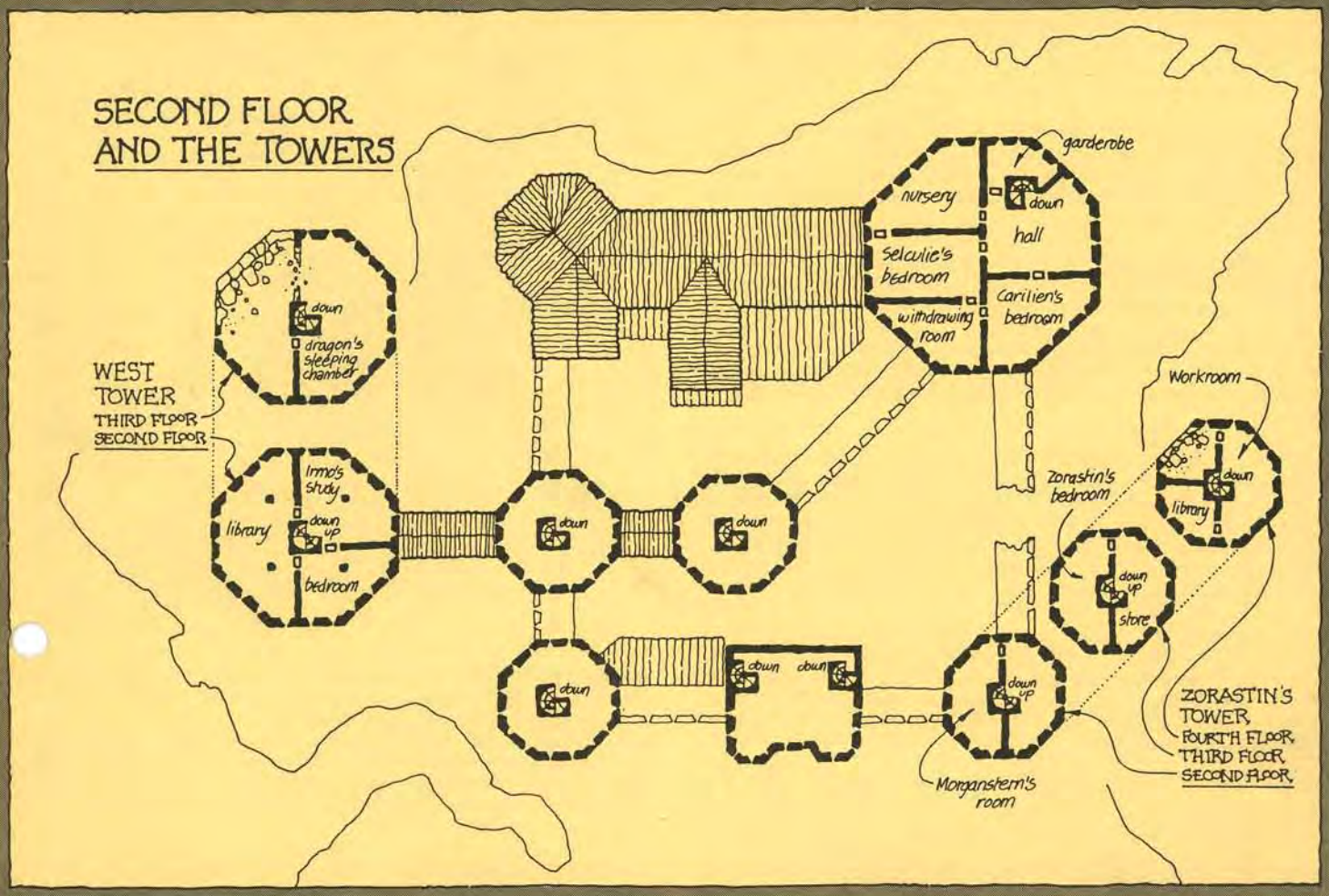
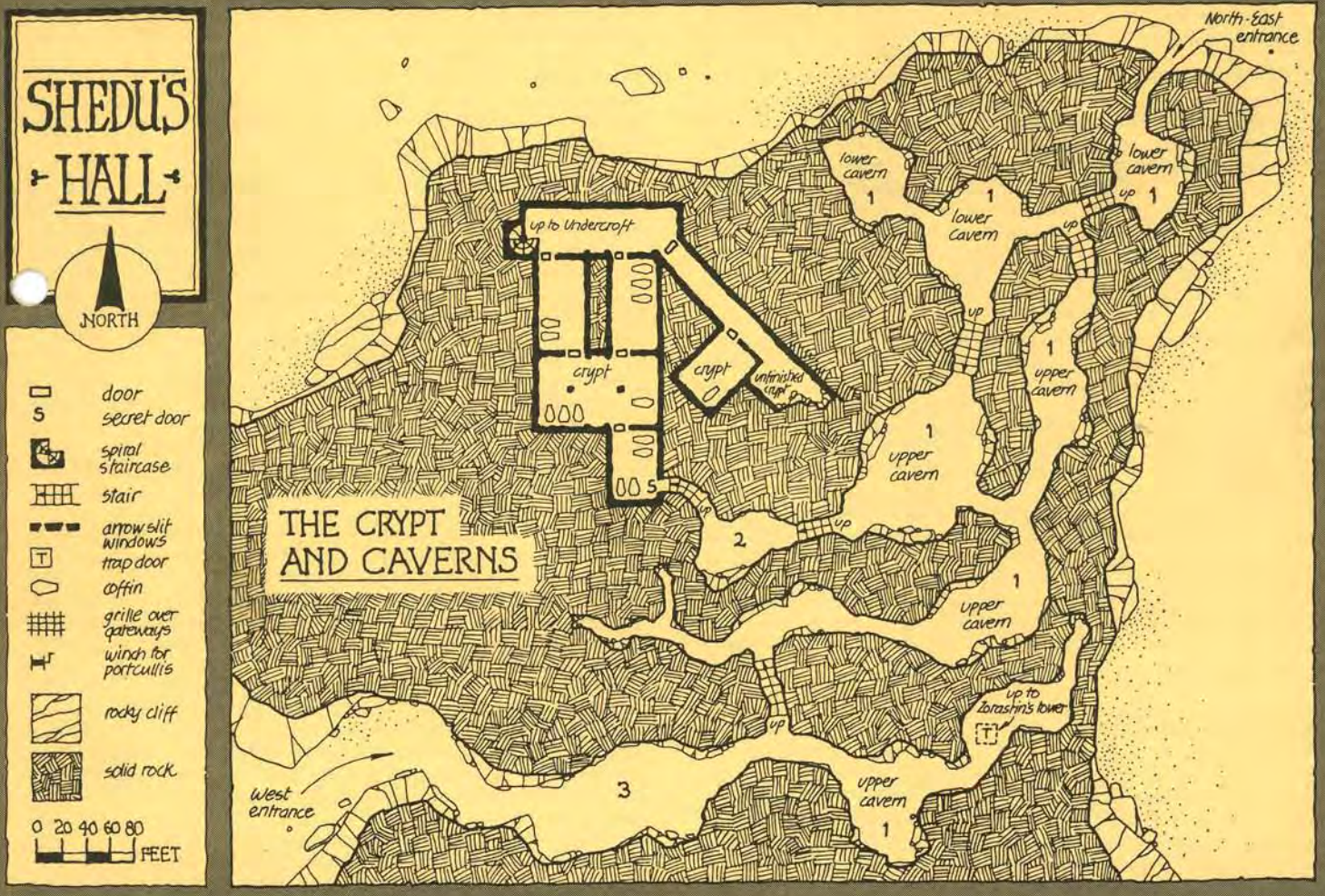
scale in feet
north-east entrance
west entrance
SHEDU'S HALL
main entrance
to steppe country


FIRST FLOOR
Chapel
down to undercroft
down
great hall
down
up
arsenal
Balmorin's quarters
in
servants' quarters
garderobe
down
up
armoury
(unused)
down
up
barracks
(unused)
down
up
barracks
(unused)
down
up
barracks
down
up
down
up
gatehouse (unused)
(unused)
down
up
barracks


GROUND FLOOR
down to crypt
up to chapel
Undercroft
up
mercenarys' barracks
well
store and wine cellar
store room
kitchen
food store
up
Inner Courtyard
pigsty
vegetable patch
up
store
up
armoury
up
armoury
Outer Courtyard
WEST TOWER
porter's lodge
guard post (unused)
well
stables
up
up
up
armoury
bed room
main entrance
up
store
ZORASTIN'S TOWER


SECOND FLOOR
AND THE TOWERS
garderobe
nursery
down
hall
Selculie's bedroom
Carilien's bedroom
withdrawing room
WEST TOWER
THIRD FLOOR
SECOND FLOOR
down
dragon's sleeping chamber
Irmo's study
library
down up
bedroom
down
down
Workroom
Zorastin's bedroom
down
library
down up
store
down
down down
down up
ZORASTIN'S TOWER
FOURTH FLOOR
THIRD FLOOR
SECOND FLOOR
Morganstern's room


SHEDU'S HALL
NORTH
door
S secret door
spiral staircase
stair
arrow slit windows
T trap door
coffin
grille over gateways
winch for portcullis
rocky cliff
solid rock
0 20 40 60 80 FEET
North-East entrance
lower cavern 1
lower cavern 1
lower cavern 1
up
up
up
up to Undercroft
crypt
crypt
unfinished crypt
S
upper cavern 1
upper cavern 1
upper cavern 1
upper cavern 1
up
up
up
2
THE CRYPT AND CAVERNS
up to Zorastin's tower
T
West entrance
3

Zorastin poses as the children's tutor, but he labours under the difficulty of an intense dislike of children, especially young ones. As a result, Zorastin spends little time with the children, preferring instead to set them problems and essays — which he never bothers to mark.

Zorastin's over-riding concerns are his powers of sorcery and his plot to overthrow the present rulers of Shedu's Hall. He has always been cautious in the past — despite the fact that he is powerful enough to deal with most opposition on his own — because he is unsure of the nature and extent of Irmo's powers.

His plotting began after he arrived at the Hall, but it was with his discovery of the Gebbeth that his plans moved ahead. By freeing the creature, he is responsible for the deterioration in Carilien's mental state, and he has also persuaded Selculie to adopt her somewhat callous attitude towards Carilien's condition. Once Carilien is under his control — through the Gebbeth — Zorastin intends to kill all the Nutgoblins and their servitors and become undisputed master of Shedu's Hall.

With the arrival in the area of a group of goblins, Zorastin's schemes were again modified. Initially he intended to destroy them as well, but after protracted — and careful — negotiations he has persuaded the goblin chieftain to provide him with sufficient troops to occupy the Hall. Once this has been done, Zorastin intends to kill any goblins with the wit to oppose him and use the rest as cheap infantry to extend his dominion beyond the confines of Shedu's Hall.

Morganstern: AC 3; T8; hp 35; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1; D by weapon; Save as T8; ML 9; AL C; XP 650; THACO 15; S 14 (+1), I 9, W 9, D 18 (+3), C 12, Ch 10; Open locks 65%, Remove traps 60%, Pick pockets 65%, Move silently 65%, Climb sheer surfaces 94%, Hide in shadows 55%, hear noise 1-4; wears **leather armour +1** and uses a **dagger +1** or a **venom blade** (see below) in combat.

Morganstern is Zorastin's flunkey. Although not really unintelligent — limited would be a better term — he lets Zorastin do all the real thinking, and follows his orders to the best of his ability. Morganstern spends most of his time in Zorastin's tower, so much so that when he visits the main body of Shedu's Hall he is treated as though he were a visitor — even though he is a permanent resident. He always keeps a careful note of the comings and goings of all connected with the Hall, and he will be well aware of the arrival of the adventurers.

In spite of — or perhaps because of — Zorastin's instructions that he should keep his hands out of other people's pockets, Morganstern still feels what he calls 'the urge'. Each night there is a 10% (cumulative) chance that Morganstern's larcenous instincts will get the better of him and he will get itchy fingers. This will result in a little expedition outside Zorastin's tower to relieve the adventurers of some of their possessions. The DM should take into account any precautions that the player characters have taken again theft in assessing Morganstern's chances of success. If he is caught Zorastin and Selculie will apologise profusely for his behaviour, but he will not be punished. Adventurers taking the law into their own hands will be treated with deep scorn by Selculie.

Morganstern's **venom blade** is a special weapon — a legacy of his Guild days. It appears to be a normal dagger, and is treated as though it were a **dagger +1**, but it has been specially modified for assassination attempts. A tube runs along the entire length of the blade, with a small opening near the tip. The pommel of the dagger unscrews, allowing a variety of poisons to be poured into this tube. The opening is usually blocked with sealing wax, so that the poison doesn't leak out of the blade. However, the first blow, successful or not, will dislodge this plug allowing the poison to contaminate any wound the blade causes. Morganstern usually fills the blade with distilled ghoul ichor, made for him by Zorastin. Anybody struck by the blade must save vs poison (at -3) or be paralyzed for 2-8 turns. Elves are not immune to this paralysis, but are entitled to a saving throw without penalties. The blade contains sufficient venom to paralyze three targets. Morganstern has a bottle of the poison (sufficient for 5 refills) in his room, as well as more conventional blade poisons and **potions of poison**.

The Gebbeth: AC variable; HD 8**; hp 64; MV 180' (60'); # by weapon or special; Save as MU11; ML 11; AL C; XP 1750; THACO 12; see New Monster section for full details.

Accidentally summoned by a long-dead member of the Nutgoblin Family, Carilien the Unnatural, a wizard of some repute, the Gebbeth has been trapped within one of the corpses in the family crypt for more than a century. Unable to overcome Zorastin's powerful mind, the Gebbeth was mollified when Zorastin brought it a new body in the shape of Stalfan. It took the mercenary's body as its own and agreed that its

plans of revenge upon the Nutgoblins and Zorastin's schemes could be intertwined. The Gebbeth currently spends much of its time — while occupying Stalfan's body — lying in one of the Nutgoblin family coffins, hence Carilien's fear of the smell of soil. Should the adventurers choose to deal with the Gebbeth as though it were a vampire, the traditional stake through the heart will only cause 1-10 points of damage, although the Gebbeth-body will act as though the attempt to destroy a vampire was totally successful.

By the time the adventurers arrive at Shedu's Hall its destruction of Carilien's mind is almost complete. On the Day 6 it will have taken over the Earl's body, and will then proceed to take over a much more valuable and worthwhile victim — Zorastin.

The Servants: AC 9; HD 1; hp see below; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1; D by weapon; Save as Normal Human; ML 6l; AL N; XP 5; THACO 20; the servants are normally unarmed, but have access to daggers (D 1-4), axes (D 1-6) and pitchforks (D 1-6).

Talbot (hp 2) — who looks older than the Hall itself — rarely leaves the 'porter's lodge' in the gatehouse, and will be the first person the adventurers meet in Shedu's Hall. Talbot's family have been in service at the Hall for generations, and it has now fallen to him to be porter —Chief Porter, mind — of the Hall. Talbot suffers from a form of snobbery based on the quality of the people that he serves, so he will take every opportunity to reinforce — in a senile kind of way — his position of trust in the service of the Nutgoblins.

Talbot is a moderately good source of information about the hall. He knows, for instance, that there are 'dungeons' beneath the castle — the family crypts. He also believes that the inner gatehouse is haunted by several ghosts; it is not, but Talbot has seen them with his own eyes and will not be persuaded otherwise. He does not know anything of Zorastin or his activities, save that the man is Tutor — but not Chief Tutor — to the Earl's children.

Tossin (hp 7) is Talbot's son, and groom/stableboy — Chief Groom and Head Gardener as he would have it. Despite his pride in his 'position of trust' he is good at his job, and any horse will prosper under his care. Tossin is married to Shelba and tends to do what she suggests. He knows little of life in Shedu's Hall other than the state of his vegetables, the horses and the pigs and chickens.

Shelba (hp 4), Tossin's better half, is ambitious enough to dare to think that one day Tossin might be more than Chief Groom (perhaps he could rise as high as Keeper of the Cellar!) and she more than Assistant Pantry Maid (Assistant Undercook, perhaps). Although a gossip and tittletattle, she keeps these untraditional thoughts strictly to herself. Shelba, despite her apparent knowledge of affairs in the Hall, is too self-preoccupied to know much about the true state of affairs, although she has seen Morganstern and Zorastin engaging in one or two midnight excursions — to obtain magical ingredients — but she doesn't know what they were doing.

Leas (hp 3) is Cook and Housekeeper (not Chief Cook, but she has all the real power below stairs). As Shelba's mother she worries about her 'little girl', and about her 'little girl's' future ambitions and how they might affect her power. Leas knows that Zorastin is more than he seems, as she once saw him cast a spell and kill a rat. This has scared her, and she is always uneasy in his presence — and even when Zorastin or magic come up in conversation. When Earl Carilien 'has one of his attacks' it is Leas who looks after him until the fit of madness has passed.

Gladeis (hp 1) is the children's nurse. She seldom, if ever, goes 'below stairs' to associate with the other servants. She is more interested in one or two of the mercenaries than the children, and consequently spends a great deal of her time in romantic walks along the castle walls.

Espieth (hp 6) the Hereditary Drudge knows the value of keeping quiet near her elders and betters. She does, however, know quite a lot about the goings on in the hall. She has seen inside Zorastin's tower (and knows that he is not a simple tutor), witnessed the Gebbeth wandering the castle late at night (although she is not sure whether she really saw someone walk down into the crypts after dark), and watched Morganstern steal money from the mercenaries' quarters. Espieth's duties include feeding the chickens that roam the outer courtyard. She will be the first NPC — other than Zorastin — to see the goblins in the gatehouse on the morning of day 6 (see the sequence of events).

Scurf (hp 2) is Potboy and Scullion. He arrived at the Hall six months ago, and has gradually insinuated himself into Leas' affections, despite the fact that he is a singularly unpleasant and disgusting little child. He never speaks of his past — or about his present for that matter — and spends those hours not at work in the kitchen tormenting the pigs (except Chitterlings) and chickens. His nasty habits also extend to his 'pets' — a small cage full of dead rats. It is his private delight to leave these corpses in embarrassing places, or to slip the occasional one into Leas' cooking.

Common Maeri, Kirthe and **Noarti** (hp 3 each) hold the posts of Castle Hoydens. The posts have by tradition always gone to the most presentable female members of the Byvich family, of which Kirthe and Noarti are members. With the lure of the City League not too distant, the Byvich family has been much reduced in this locality, and thus only two cousins could be found to occupy the posts; the third was then filled by an orphaned farmgirl, Common Maeri. This has caused more than a little outrage and horror among the Castle staff, and, since Maeri is much more attractive than the two Byvich women, a fair degree of jealousy.

There is little to choose between the women's personalities; each is vain, conceited and utterly unscrupulous. They are also virtually ignored by the mercenary contingent, which will have the effect of making the women very pushy in the company of those male adventurers at the Castle with a charisma of 16 or higher.

Fullpoop (hp 3) is the Master of the Arsenal, the place where he lives, sleeps and breathes the stuff of martial grandeur — weaponry and armour. He is responsible for the state of the castle's stock of war materials which, in the case of much of the weaponry and armour in the outlying towers, is poor. It is largely rusted and decayed to the point of uselessness. The equipment in the Arsenal itself is, by comparison, in excellent condition. Fullpoop has little inclination to do anything other than clean and polish it, being rather senile, but if treated with respect and kindness he will clean and mend any weapons the adventurers may have, especially any magical ones. Of course, anyone who does so runs the risk of being bored to tears, as Fullpoop loves to talk about the history of arms and armour, and about the weapons and equipment it was his duty to care for in his younger days.

Bagwarlock: AC 9; C5; hp 16; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1; D by weapon; Save as C5; ML 4; AL L; XP 300; THACO 17; S 9, I 5, W 10, D 7, C 8, Ch 5; spells — **cure light wounds** (x2), **bless, know alignment**.

The Master of Feasts and Festivals and Castle Chaplain is the dullest, most unimaginative person in the Hall. Humourless, and unable to see what humour might be, he is completely unsuited to the organisation of entertainment and celebration. During their stay, the adventurers will find their nightly entertainment dull to the extreme, and it will be very rare for there to be enough wine or ale to slake the thirsts of doughty warriors.

For those who like that sort of thing, Bagwarlock is much more suited to the post of Castle Chaplain. His particular speciality is the type of sermon he delivers on holidays and religious festivals; an obscure and weighty monologue on something like Evil As The Rising Damp Of Society. The man is clearly a buffoon. Bagwarlock has regularly seen the Gebbeth (in Stalfan's body) as it leaves the crypt and goes to torment Carilien. He has always assumed that it is a member of the household he hasn't formally met. He and the Gebbeth are nodding acquaintances, as far as he is concerned, and he will not hear a word said against it — "after all, you can't go around accusing people without evidence, you know!"

The Goblin Tribe

The goblins in the caverns beneath the Hall are recent arrivals, but are nevertheless part of Zorastin's plans. They are well organised underground, occupying all the chambers except the entrance cavern and the chamber with the secret door into the crypts. Once they have taken Shedu's Hall for Zorastin, it is the chief's intention to have the wizard for a meal — literally.

In all, there are 315 goblins:

Goblin Chieftain: AC 6; HD 3; hp 15; MV 90' (30'); #AT 1; D by weapon; Save as F3; ML 9; AL C; XP 35; THACO 17; B31.
Goblin Shaman: AC 6; HD 4; hp 18; MV 90' (30'); #AT 1; D 1-6; Save as C4; ML 10; AL C; XP 125; THACO 16; spells — **darkness, cause fear** and **blight**; special monster.
9 Goblin guards: AC 6; HD 2; hp 12 each; MV 90' (30'); #AT 1; D by weapon; Save as F2; ML C; AL 7 or 9; XP 20; THACO 18; B31.
140 Goblins: AC 6; HD 1-1; hp 5 each; MV 90' (30'); #AT 1; D by weapon; Save as Normal Man; ML 7 or 9; AL C; XP 5; THACO 19; B31.
88 Female Goblins: AC 6; HD 1-1; hp 4 each; MV 90' (30'); #AT 1; D by weapon; Save as Normal Man; ML 7 or 9; AL C; XP 5; THACO 19; B31.
76 Goblin children: AC 6; HD 1-1; hp 1 each; MV 90' (30'); #AT nil; D nil Save as Normal Man; ML 6; AL C; XP 5; THACO n/a.

The goblins are armed with a variety of weapons — hand axes, short swords, spears and hammers — all of which cause 1d6 damage. Each of the goblins has 1-10sp in mixed coins and trinkets. The goblin females will only become involved in a fight if they are given no choice in the matter — they will not take part in the assault on the Hall. The children are non-combatant.

Elsewhere in the caverns are a small family of ghouls (in the cavern marked 2). These ghouls have an agreement with the goblins, whereby the goblins allow them access to any corpses they don't want. In return, the ghouls prevent any investigation of the caverns from the crypts above. The ghouls will take no part in the attack upon the Hall, beyond coming up if the goblins are victorious to take their share of the bodies.

7 ghouls: AC 6; HD 2*; hp 15 each; MV 90' (30'); #AT 3; D 1-3/1-3/1-3+ special; Save as F2; ML 9; AL C; XP 25; THACO 18; touch causes **paralysis**; B30.

The ghouls have little treasure. One of them wears a pair of **elven boots**, another has a scroll case hanging around its neck. In the case is a scroll with **cure disease** and **cure serious wounds** spells upon it.

In one cavern (3), the entrance cave is temporarily occupied by Fruoge Fuddleskin, a black dragon, resting up here in the middle of a journey to the steppe country. The goblins have, quite understandably, given her a wide berth, but if Irmo should be told of her presence he will attempt to **charm** her into his srvice at the earliest opportunity.

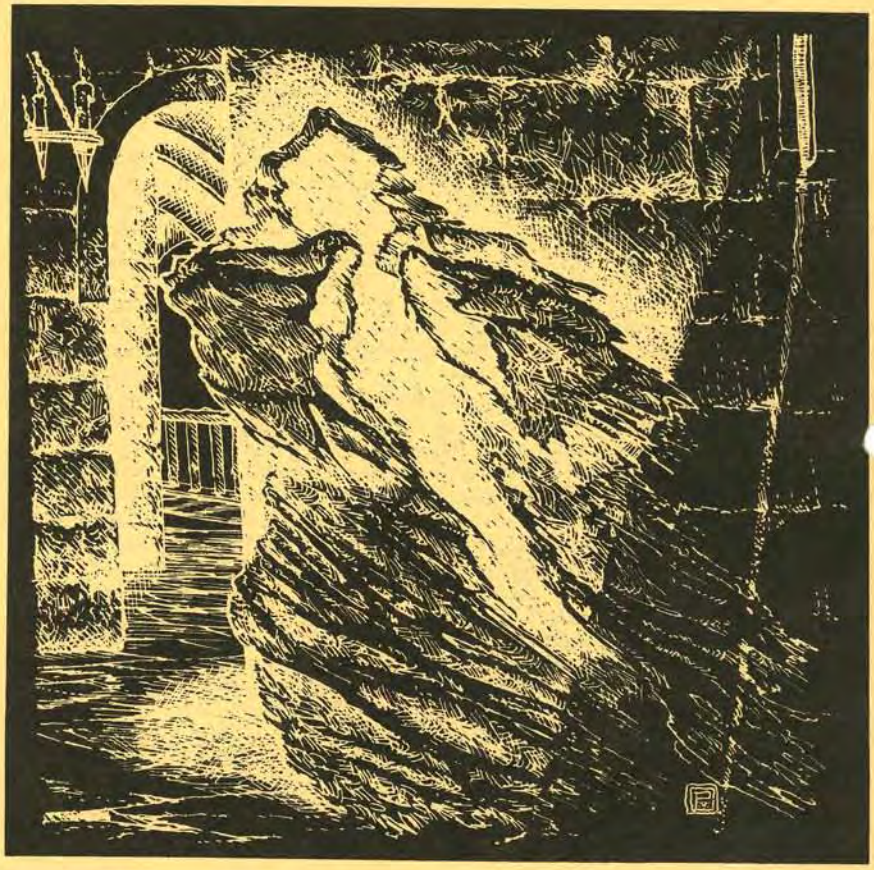
Fruoge Fuddleskin, the black dragon: AC 2; HD 7**; hp 12 (32); MV 90' (30') or flying 240' (80'); #AT 3; D 2-5/2-5/2-20; Save as F7; ML 8; AL C; XP 1250; THACO 13; breath weapon; **charm person** (x2), **darkness, shield**; B28.

Fruoge has brought none of her treasure to this cavern, but, should the need arise, can give directions to her home, where there is great wealth. She will leave the caverns during the night of day 5 and fly south, unnoticed by all as she flies low in the darkness of Cirbell Pass.

Using the War Machine

Should the DM have a copy of the D&D Companion rules, the goblin assault can be handled using the War Machine rules. The mercenaries have a Battle Rating of 82 and a troop class of Fair. The goblins have a Battle Rating of 29 and are Poor troops. The DM should remember that the goblins must be divided into smaller forces with identical Battle Ratings for the final assault, and the mercenaries will benefit from the battle being treated as a series of mini-sieges. The DM will have to calculate the Battle Rating and Troop class of any adventurers involved.

The Gebbeth



Armour Class: *0 or variable*
Hit Dice: *8***
Move: *180' (60') or variable*
Attacks: *1 touch or weapon*
Damage: *insanity, ability drain* or by weapon
No. Appearing: *1*
Save As: *Magic User 8*
Morale: *11*
Treasure Type: *nil*
Alignment: *C*
XP Value: *1750*

The Gebbeth is an insubstantial malevolent spirit that can only be released into the world as the result of powerful and misguided magic. When a magic user casts a summoning spell of some type, a spell involving any of the Planes or an **animate dead** spell, there is a 1% chance that a Gebbeth will be accidentally involved.

In its insubstantial form a Gebbeth attacks by touch. If it strikes its victim — and that victim has an intelligence of 10 or less — the Gebbeth enters the victim's mind, gaining total control of the victim's body in the process. If the attack is successful the Gebbeth 'makes itself at home' and then is raised to 18 as the creature's natural wiliness takes command. The victim is entitled to a saving throw vs magic wands, and if this is successful the Gebbeth cannot attack again that day.

Once in a body, the Gebbeth can use all the abilities and skills that its victim had before it took over, including any weapon handling skills and spells that were memorised at the time of the initial attack. It can only memorise half the original number of spells of a victim, eg a Gebbeth-Warlock could only memorise 3 spells at any one time. The Gebbeth-body does not need food (but does require water), although if it doesn't eat it will become gaunt and cadaverous.

Gebbeth in possession of a body can still attack, but it can now restrain itself so as to cause less damage to a target. Each successful touch drains 1 point of Intelligence or Constitution from its target — when either of these drops to zero the victim dies. If these attacks are spread over a period of days or months — as is likely because the Gebbeth takes a positive delight in tormenting its victims if it has the chance — the victim will also suffer from some form of insanity, usually an irrational fear of some item connected with the Gebbeth. The Gebbeth uses t[illegible] ability to weaken a foe before attempting to possess his or h[illegible] body.

Gebbeths can only be hit by magical weaponry. They are not undead and cannot be turned by a cleric.

A Gebbeth has one particular 'ability' that is more terrifying than any other. In times of stress — when wounded, for example —there is a 1 in 6 chance that the creature's features will start to fade. The process takes 3 rounds in total, at the end of which the face will be completely blank. Anyone witnessing such a change should save vs spells or suffer the effects of a **blight** spell due to the unnerving prospect of an opponent's features altering without apparent reason.

CREDITS

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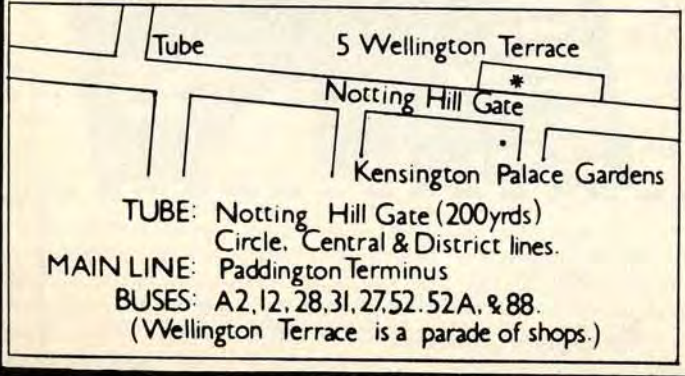

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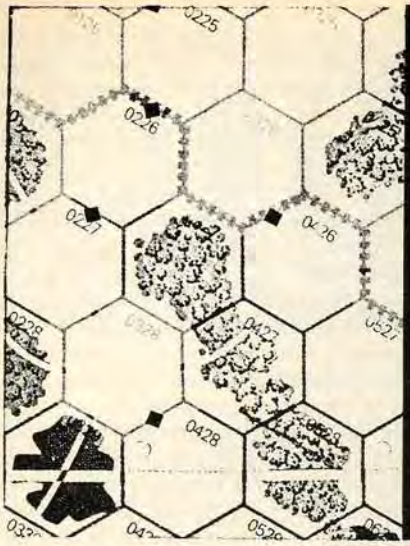


An Introduction to BOARD WARGAMING

by Roger Musson

Mention the word *wargaming* to most people outside the hobby itself, and it conjures up a picture of pushing brightly-painted model soldiers over an elaborately-modelled tabletop landscape. Yet, although figures wargaming with models is still popular in clubs up and down the country, it probably accounts for only a minority of historical wargaming that goes on. Since the late sixties and early seventies, it has gradually been overtaken by the newer art of board wargaming.

It isn't too difficult to see why. If you decide to take up figures wargaming, first you must equip yourself with enough models to make up an army, then spend evening after evening painting them, and a further amount of time working out a suitable engagement to fight and building your model battlefield to fight on — all before you get to so much as roll a die. By contrast, he who would take up board wargaming needs only go along to his local games shop, buy a suitable package, take it home, open the box, and start playing almost immediately.

Although role-playing games, via the D&D® game, are more directly descended from miniatures or figure wargaming than from board wargames, there is an important link in that the initial growth of role-playing games as a hobby tended to be among the board wargaming community. The existence of a substantial number of players used to simulation games with fairly complex rules, nourished by such companies as Avalon Hill and SPI, was probably a necessary condition for the success of the first role-playing games. In those days, people tended to be introduced to role-playing games via board wargames, though now, of course, the rpg hobby has expanded far more rapidly. Players of rpgs tend to be recruited directly — and the situation with regard to board wargames has in many respects reversed. It is probably more likely today for someone to be introduced to historical wargames through fantasy role-playing than vice versa. It is to such people, those who are experienced at rpgs but have never tried their hand at board wargaming, that this article is addressed. In this article I shall consider the traditional, historical wargame; in subsequent issues I shall say something about fantasy and science fiction wargames.

So why play board wargames? Such games do have certain points in common with rpgs. Both are essentially simulation games — games that try and represent some situation fairly accurately, be it adventuring in an enchanted forest, or fighting aerial battles over the trenches during the First World War. Both have tried, therefore, to have fairly elaborate rules, in order to cover all the important influences operating in the situation that have to be mirrored in the simulation, be it the endurance of the fightingman hacking through the forest, or the speed of a Sopwith Camel. Contrast this with a family boardgame like **Monopoly** — definitely not a simulation game by anybody's standards. And of course, a game like Monopoly has very short rules by comparison. Wisdom was, at one time in the gaming industry, that no game with any more elaborate rules than Monopoly would ever sell — that if granny couldn't play it, it would be a flop. The vast success of such games as D&D has shown what nonsense that turned out to be!

The great advantage of the board wargame is that it combines a game you can win in an evening with the interest of playing an accurate simulation

The big difference between the rpg and the wargame is that the latter is a closed, competitive game like chess, while the former is an open-ended, continuing campaign in which one pits one's wits against the environment rather than against another player. There is much to be said for both forms of game. The great advantage of the board wargame over other sorts of competitive game is that it does combine a game that you can win in an evening (with all those particular delights that go with winning anything) with the interest of playing an accurate simulation of something. One has the chance to measure the game against reality, and this can be so interesting as to quite compensate for losing on those unfortunate occasions when the dice just don't seem to go your way. Take some famous occasion like the battle of Waterloo. What would have happened if Napoleon had directed the greater part of his forces against Blucher instead of against Wellington? Would he have done any better? Would you have done any better if you had been in command of the French army? By playing board wargames one can explore such questions. Not only do you get a chance to experiment with history, if a game is any good you also get to see at first hand why history happened the way it did. In a game like **Lawrence of Arabia** (WWW), which covers the 1918 British offensive in Palestine, you can see for yourself just why the Turkish army was so powerless to stop Lawrence's raiding attacks — if the Turkish player gathers enough forces to contain Lawrence's motley band of Arabs, he finds he really needed them elsewhere, with disastrous results. It is one thing to read in a history book what happens if an army outruns its source of supply — it's another thing altogether to actually see it happening to you.

In a way, one can think of a wargame as a sort of rpg (using the term extremely loosely) where one takes on the role of the historical commander. An rpg can put you in the shoes of Conan, or Luke Skywalker, or James Bond. It doesn't usually put you in the shoes of Napoleon or Montgomery. The problems of killing an army are very different from those of killing a kobold. They are also rather more involved — there is generally much more to think about in playing a wargame than the average rpg.

A curiosity of the board wargame is its suitability for solitaire play. It is the ideal game for the solitary gamer stranded on St Kilda with no-one to play. Although there are wargames specially designed for solitaire play (eg **Iwo Jima**, recently published by S&T® magazine), most two-player games can be played enjoyably by one player playing both sides. To someone who has never tried this it might sound rather daft. After all, imagine playing chess against oneself; since, as Black, one knows all the plans one has

devised as White, and vice versa, how is either side to win? But wargames are much more involved than chess. In chess, the success of any particular 'combat' is known in advance — in a clash between two pieces it is always the moving one that beats the other. But when two armies meet the result is far from certain in reality, and therefore must be uncertain in a game as well. This uncertainty makes it possible to play both sides of a wargame and generate a good deal of excitement in the process. You might concoct a daring plan for side A — will it bring success? As side B you can see the plan from the other side, but can you stop it? Doing your best for both sides, the battle can swing one way and then the other as some attacks succeed and others fail, the overall result being unpredictable until the very last turn.

In fact, a recent survey of wargamers revealed the curious statistic that more time is spent playing wargames in this way than playing against an opponent. Perhaps it's one way of avoiding the chance of losing! Most wargames published are designed for two players, and these are usually suitable for solitaire play unless they use such devices as hidden forces (something akin to battleships and cruisers).

There are also games designed for more players, and though these do not play well solitaire, they present a range of interesting situations. The archetypal multi-player wargame is the celebrated **Diplomacy**, which achieved cult status long before the D&D game was even a gleam in Gary Gygax's eyes. In a game like Diplomacy, each player will take the part of a single nation, and the play of the game is as much the making and breaking of alliances as the actual fighting between armies on the map. In fact, Diplomacy itself, the negotiations, the fibs, the treachery, is virtually the whole game. For those who have never played Diplomacy — take up any opportunity you get to try this game: you won't regret it.

It has to be said that the range of historical situation games available (including out-of-print games still to be found knocking around second hand) is nothing short of phenomenal — there is something to be found for almost any interest. From games covering ancient warfare (Avalon Hill's **Alexander the Great**, SPI's **Chariot**) to games on the most modern conflict (WWW's **Port Stanley**, Victory Games' **Gulf Strike**) most periods get some sort of look-in, though there is a bias towards games of the Second World War. Similarly, there is great variety in the type of game published. There are games on individual infantry combat, where a counter on the map might represent a single infantry squad, or even a single soldier. Then there are games on battles where the map board of the game represents an entire battlefield and the counters on each side are regiments or brigades. At a scale up from that, a game might represent a whole campaign. **Battles of the Hundred Days** (AH), for instance, represents the whole Waterloo campaign, including the battles of Quatre Bras and Ligny which took place two days before Waterloo itself, whereas the Yaquinto game **Thin Red Line** (despite its anachronistic title) covers just the climactic battle of Waterloo itself. At a scale up from that again, we have the strategic game, which covers a whole war. A celebrated example of such a game is the ever-popular **Third Reich** (AH), which covers the whole of the Second World War in Europe, and is also a multi-player game, with separate players for the UK, USA, France, Soviet Union, Italy and, of course, the Third Reich itself. One can even increase the scale further still — **Civilisation** (AH) guides its players through thousands of years of ancient history, and is also a good example of a board wargame which is just as much a 'peacegame', since military conflict is a relatively minor part of the business of leading your chosen nation to prosperity and culture.

Just as you can pick a game to suit your taste in scale and period, there is also a wide range of different degrees of complexity in games available. If you want to look at the subject of a game in really deep detail, there are plenty of games that spare little. But the more detailed, the longer a game takes to play, and the more effort it requires. Contrariwise, a simple game may miss out on some of the historical factors that influenced the real-life situation, but gains by being easy to pick up and quick to play. Thus, whereas (returning again to Napoleon's final defeat) **Victory at Waterloo** by Attactix Games is a simple introduction to wargaming, quick and easy to play but with relatively little insight into the historical problems, **Wellington's Victory** (TSR/SPI) is a massively detailed, painstakingly researched simulation, which needs literally days to play through to a conclusion.

I would also mention the different topics that have been made into games. All the above games have concentrated on land-based warfare. There are plenty of games on other sorts of conflict as well — on naval battles, air combat, and even on political struggles, an example of the latter being SPI's attempt to produce a game on Quebecois separatism in contemporary Canadian politics. Perhaps not a subject to catch everybody's imagination (even in Canada) but it goes to show how almost anything that has more than one side in conflict can be turned into a simulation game.

And that brings me to my final point — perhaps the wargames hobby has suffered slightly for its name. The inclusion of the word 'war' seems to give some people the idea that wargamers are all really nasty militaristic types bent on world domination. Nothing could be further from the truth — most that I know are the most pacific people imaginable. The problem is more acute when it comes to fantasy games. Is Third Reich a wargame? Yes, undoubtedly. And **Squad Leader**? We would say so. And **Fellowship of the Ring**? Well, I suppose so... **Talisman**? Well, not really... D&D? In the States there has been an attempt to do away with the word *wargame* and replace it with *adventure game*. Is Third Reich an adventure game? Is the Second World War an adventure? That doesn't really sound right either. The truth of the matter, I would contend, is that all the games I've mentioned in this article bar chess and Monopoly are *simulation games* of one sort or another. Some have boards and counters, and for want of a better word, we call them wargames; let the word stand. Some don't, and we call them role-playing games. Both have a significant amount in common, and for those who enjoy the one, it's well worth at least sampling the other.

Roger Musson

ILLUMINATIONS

CONTINUAL LIGHT

Presumptious grass seedlings, attempting to sprout from beneath the enormous black boots of Alan Hickling, will have been disappointed recently. Not only has Alan's company, Endless Games, had a half share in producing the **Halls of the Dwarven Kings**, that recently released de luxe rpg aid, but also, in defiance of the absurd notion that each day should be restricted to 24 hours, he has been designing a new set in his **Endless Plans** series. This is the **Forest Set**, and represents Endless Games' first foray into the Great Outdoors. It enables the player to construct all manner of woods, forests and clearings, and includes pathways, rocks, stream pieces, cottages and various other odds and ends, all tucked away in a boxed set. Those who know the Endless Plans format will appreciate the advantages of being able to use its sophistication for wilderness adventures as well as dungeoneering.

Torchlight Products are converting their existing range of three-dimensional dungeon floors and corridors to one-piece castings. This, along with the *very* careful packing that Torchlight employ will help to ensure that these fine models travel through the post intact. The item in this range I reviewed in #21 did not have the advantages of four integral walls (it depicted a ruinous area) nor was it packed to Torchlight's standards (it was jiffy-bagged by the **IMAGINE** magazine office). This explains why it reached me in several pieces. It is very unlikely that this could happen to a piece bought direct.

Matt Love of Torchlight tells me that in their S (for Special) range, S1 **Dragon's Room**, S3 **Tavern** and S4 **Throne Room** are now available in 1-piece castings. The B (Basic) range is steadily being converted to one-piece castings and there is now a B6 triangular unit available for the creation of more varied room shapes.

Grenadiers and Dragoons

There is always a bountiful number of conventions and exhibitions in the south of England but precious few up north on the civilised side of the Pennines. Therefore I make no apology for mentioning **Dragoon '85**, scheduled for February 23rd at the Bluecoat Chambers in Liverpool. This, as the title suggests, is primarily a wargames event but IMAGINE types will be interested in a large, 15mm scale, fantasy battle as well as public participation role-playing games. Groups from Oldham, Chester, Stockport and Warrington are due to attend, and there will be trade stands. I even hope to have a little booth there myself, from which to dispense Grenadier miniatures to a grateful populace. By February, Grenadier should have their new **Samurai** figures available, and perhaps the first of the **Middle Earth** range. See you there.

Keeping Busy?

Jon Sutherland (assistant editor of Another Magazine) has a promising second career as Disseminator of Information for Games Workshop's latest products and plans. The other day he read me a list of upcoming releases up to November '85 that sounded like a declaration of Territorial Demands in Europe. What other British games outfit could assemble such a Panzer Division of projects?

If we limit ourselves to the period up to the Spring, we find that February will bring the **Star Trek Combat Simulator**, a UK printing of FASA's ship-to-ship combat wargame. It should sell for about £10. In March, the British printing of the excellent **Middle Earth Role-Playing Game** is due, along with **Legacy of Eagles**, a **Golden Heroes** scenario. Good news for comic fans and lovers of rough justice everywhere is that the **Judge Dredd** rpg should also be out at this time. This will be followed by a scenario called, appropriately, **Rough Justice**. Then there will be the latest in the **Dungeon Planner** series. It is thought that the self-effacing but brilliant Ian Marsh (yesterday's *enfant terrible*, now every inch a Company Man) will have a hand in the production. The influence of Mr Marsh was evident in **Dungeon Planner 2**, a much better effort than the dismal DP1.

There's a lot more from the Workshop but before the editor (whom I strongly suspect to be a secret **Private Eye** reader) inserts a "that's enough Workshop games — Ed" comment, we'll call a halt. Must squeeze in a final quote from Jon, however. He promises at least "one mega-product a month". That's the kind of thing they teach them to say at the recently opened Games Workshop School of Communications (Faculty of Streetwise Studies).

Meanwhile, across in the USA, TSR are putting together a bumper package of their own. The **D&D® Masters Set** has appeared on Schedules for the first time, with a US release date of August. Also making its debut on the predictions list, **CONAN®** the role-playing game. I think most of you might be able to make an educated guess as to roughly what both of these games is about, but how about the **DREAMER®** or **MATRIX** role-playing games? We do know that the Lake Geneva designers have been working on a generic rpg system, playable to any style of gaming, *à la* **Lords of Creation**. That accounts for MATRIX; watch this space to see what else we can find out. The list of modules for '85 release looks fairly impressive. There's B8 **Journey to the Rock**, B9 **Castle Caldwell and Beyond**, C3 **Castanamir**, C4 **To Find A King**, C5 **The Bane of Llewellyn**, O2 **Blade of Vengeance**, CM4 **The Earthshaker**, X9 **The Savage Coast**, DL6 **Dragons of Ice**, DL7 **Dragon of Light** and, no, no, it can't be true.... it must be a spoof.... surely that can't be T2 back on the Schedules — isn't it a bit early for April Fool jokes? But there it is, listed for June release and carrying a $15 price tag (compared to the $6 of a normal module). At least you can't say there hasn't been time to save up for it....

One or two extras: the CONAN role-playing game will be swiftly supported by the CN series of modules, the first of which will be **CONAN® the Buccaneer**. These CONAN modules are for the CONAN rpg and not to be confused with the CONAN modules for the AD&D game.... or the CONAN ENDLESS QUEST® book for that matter. H1 **Bloodstone Pass** is back on the list, which will be good news for those people after mass combat rules for the AD&D game. Also interesting, there is something called CM(ACC) **The Book of Marvelous Magic** for Companion level characters in the D&D game.

The **STAR FRONTIERS KNIGHT HAWKS** game also has a couple of new releases, SFKH3 **Face of the Enemy** and SFKH4 **War Machine**; **MARVEL SUPERHEROES** and **INDIANA JONES** likewise.

Getting In

by Paul Mason

Advice to new gamers on joining the ranks of 'The Hobby'

Way back in issue 11, Victoria Kassner wrote of the problems of actually getting involved in the Role-Playing Games Hobby. **IMAGINE**™ magazine has so far devoted considerable space to the 'novice' or potential gamer, and yet Victoria's letter made it clear that there are pitfalls that have yet to be dealt with. Victoria also criticised the cliquey feel of IMAGINE — its in-jokes and the fact that the same people seemed to be mentioned all the time. These two questions are related, and I'd like to try and answer them.

Fanzines & Fandom

Perhaps the best place to start is to look at what this strange beastie 'fandom' is, since it seems to be responsible for much of the cliquishness.

As long as there have been role-playing games, there have been fans who were prepared to put out amateur publications dealing with them. One of the first was **Alarums & Excursions** edited by Lee Gold, of Los Angeles. This magazine is an APA (Amateur Press Association), which means that any submission received by the editor will be printed, with only a small amount of editorial control. As one would expect, this results in a lot of very poor material, but the surprising thing is that there are also very useful, interesting pieces in amongst the dross. It is worth noting that one of the contributors to **A&E** 2, which came out in late 1976, was none other than E Gary Gygax, designer of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game. A&E recently reached 100 issues, and Gary Gygax's article was reprinted as part of the celebration. The British equivalent of A&E, **Trollcrusher**, has only managed to reach 27 or so issues but it also has its own unique style.

Soon after the APAs had started, however, the first FRP fanzines arose. The term fanzine is a contraction of 'fan magazine', incidentally, not 'fantasy magazine' as some people would have it. Probably the most influential of the early fanzines was the **Underworld Oracle**. Although it only reached seven issues, Underworld Oracle was well respected, and, among other things, partly inspired the late lamented **DragonLords** (of which more anon).

Another important fanzine was **The Beholder**, which was renowned for its reliability and consistent quality. The Beholder stuck to a tried and trusted formula of new character classes, monsters and dungeons for the AD&D® game at a time when the only professional FRP magazine, **White Dwarf**, was rather more diverse.

Until recently the most notorious FRP fanzine was DragonLords, which arose from humble beginnings (Ian Marsh, one of its editors, will still cringe at the mere mention of DragonLords 1) to being voted best fanzine at Games Day three years in succession.

That is a brief outline of the more important FRP fanzines, but several years ago contact was made with a longer established fandom — the Postal Gaming Hobby. This contact was pioneered by Pete Tamlyn, editor of **The Acolyte**. Thus many of the magazines mentioned in IMAGINE's 'Fanzines' column are in fact unconnected with role-playing games, but concern such games as **Diplomacy**, which can be played by post.

Fandom does not simply consist of a number of editors and readers of fanzines corresponding by post, however. It has its own gatherings, though these are usually very informal, held in pubs once or twice a month, or at games conventions such as Games Day or GamesFair. This alienates many people, especially since fandom vehemently rejects any attempt at forming centralised authority.

In recent years, there has been a marked change in the content of the more established fanzines. Where formerly the model was a Beholder-style melange of character classes, dungeon scenarios and the like, fanzines began to concentrate on different areas of interest — articles on 'theory', background information, auxiliary rules and, increasingly, extraneous elements such as postal games, humour and music.

The reason for this change was the new dominance by the professional magazines (or prozines as they are called in fandom). IMAGINE and White Dwarf magazines were able to present high quality material (through the incentive of payment) in a professional format, and prompted many to believe that 'The Age of the Fanzine is over'.

Prozines

The prozines seem to be constantly expanding their circulation. With the national distribution of both White Dwarf and IMAGINE magazine by W H Smith, even more people are discovering the hobby of role-playing games, and a large number are going to want to get involved. Hence there is a pressure on the editors of the prozines to make their products introductory in nature and as accessible as possible. Against this, there is the pressure of those already in the hobby for more advanced material.

There is a similar contradiction in 'atmosphere'. IMAGINE magazine has been criticised for mentioning the same names all the time. Thus it seems cliquey. And yet if it distances itself from its readers then it will seem unfriendly. The question here is to what extent there appears to be an inaccessible group with a privileged control of attention in the magazine.

Curiously enough, in IMAGINE's case, the group which is being accused of being in this situation is none other than fandom, which I briefly described earlier. So why is it that the same names of people who are involved in fandom keep appearing in IMAGINE magazine? Quite simply, it is because they are dedicated enough to get involved. IMAGINE magazine has shown that it can be responsive to fans in a way that no other professional magazine has been. This doesn't mean, however, that the newcomer, or the casual gamer, should feel 'left out'. Fandom dominates only the likes of Pete Tamlyn's old column **Tavern Talk** (remember the 'Poisonous Toe-rag'?) and the fanzine reviews — the only reason it has strayed into the letter column in any numbers is because fans are usually the kind of people who like to write and comment and they are used to doing so.

Getting Into Role-playing

So far I've tried to explain why I think readers of IMAGINE magazine should tolerate the names that pop up so regularly in its pages. It isn't favouritism, it's just that dedicated fans tend to be more vociferous and persistent.

There is another strand to this subject, however, which may be of more general interest to readers of this magazine, particularly new readers. How does one get started in role-playing?

This is a very recent hobby — and in ten years it has grown at a phenomenal rate. Thus it is not surprising that getting involved is still as vaguely explained as it was in the beginning. There are a limited number of choices open to the prospective role-player, and I'd like to look over them:

i) Start your own group. In the early days of the hobby, role-playing groups would emerge because someone had bought the rules and managed to interest the others. Groups that emerged in this way would often generate their own conventions of play, and sometimes even rules. This independent approach often led to members of these groups getting involved in fandom, putting out a zine.

This is, of course, a difficult option for a new gamer. You have to try and convince a number of people to play, and often you aren't fully clear on the rules. Without any source of reference, groups like this can be fragile.

ii) Try and get into an already existing group. This has the advantage that the group will presumably be fully in command of the rules and reasonably experienced. The problems with this are those of contacting a group in the first place, and then all the problems associated with being a newcomer to an established social group.

iii) Join a club. In the last issue of IMAGINE and on page 53 of this, a list is given of clubs which run role-playing games. Clearly, joining a club is a lot easier than either of the previous alternatives, but be warned, there are pitfalls here as well. Some clubs are not particularly welcoming. Others are, but still fail to cater for a newcomer. A common occurrence at a club is that someone will stand up and say something like 'OK, anyone want to play *Grotnia*?'. The newcomer is not to know that he or she is being included in the open invitation to play in a role-playing campaign, and yet the offending DM may later claim that he or she has not excluded the newcomer. This kind of misunderstanding can cause bad feeling.

Despite these worries, I would still recommend joining a club as the best way of getting into role-playing. They have many advantages over the other two alternatives — they often meet in public premises, rather than the sometimes intimidating situation of gaming at someone's home; they have formal authority — so there is someone you can go to; and finally, they often give you access to various gaming aids, so that you don't need to spend a fortune initially.

A crucial thing to remember in getting involved with rolegames with established players is not to let them take advantage of you. As a novice, it is your right to question any rule you're unsure of, and it is good advice to think twice about suggestions made by experienced players — particularly when they are recommending that your character do something that their own characters refuse to. At the same time it is wise to keep a little subdued at first — stay receptive, pick up on what's going on, how things are done etc. If anyone criticises you for not pulling your weight or being active enough, point out that you're still learning.

Getting Into Fandom

Let's face it, most people want to do all they can to steer clear of fandom! All they want is to be allowed to enjoy a pleasant pastime in peace without being accosted at conventions by some loony with a games shop bag on his head. However, a few people are sufficiently excited by the concept of role-playing games that they feel it merits that little extra effort. One possibility is to join the legions of fans involved with the various zines.

You may have got the impression that fandom is a small bunch of people who all know each other. This is by no means true. While the number of active fans is small (probably only a few hundred), there really is no one dominant idea or clique. Rather it is a group of gamers who happen to be sufficiently interested in their hobby that they get involved in zines, or games run in zines. In fact, even this definition is deficient — many zines do not restrict themselves to role-playing or postal games.

Articles on such diverse and bizarre subjects as Rock Music, Literature, Films and even edible underwear demonstrate that a zine is simply a form of self-expression. Another crucial feature is their discursive nature. A letters column is a prominent fixture in most zines, and because they have fewer commercial pressures, zines' letter columns can be longer and have a more varied approach to subjects than prozines letters pages.

It is here that someone who is potentially interested in fandom should begin. Zines are easy to acquire — editors will often let you have a free sample issue, and they are usually quite cheap anyway. Furthermore, most zine editors will be only too pleased to answer any enquiries about their zine. You may find that something in a zine makes you want to write and comment, and once you have your first letter printed you'll find you're suddenly an initiate of the infamous institution of fandom! The next step might be meeting people you correspond with at a 'hobbymeet'. These are announced in **20 Years On**, the zine which also provides an exhaustive listing of gaming and role-playing fanzines. It can be traumatic attending one of these for the first time, but most fannish types are reasonably affable and you might find you enjoy even the interminable arguments over Diplomacy tactics!

Conventions

Say you've just got involved in role-playing games. Is it worth going to a convention? Well, that depends on a lot of things. Certainly, going on your own to a games convention can be a tremendously alienating experience. Knowing somebody via postal correspondence is a lot better, but still not as good as going with a group of people whom you know —ideally your role-playing games group.

So what happens at conventions? Well, at non-residential conventions such as **Games Day** or **Dragonmeet**, there are a large number of trade stalls, so if you want to buy some rolegaming merchandise you are virtually certain of finding it. On the other hand, relatively little gaming goes on. Conventions such as **GamesFair** and **Stabcon** put the emphasis on playing games rather than buying things.

To return once again to my particular 'angle' on these subjects — conventions can be a good way of experiencing fandom. Many cons have fanzine stands, at which you can see the kind of thing fanzines are, rather than ordering blindly by post. Often, you can acquire a few for free if a representative of 20 Years On is present. And of course, you can meet some of these 'famous' people whose names keep cropping up in IMAGINE magazine...

And Finally...

In this article I've tried both to give a brief description and introduction to fandom, and to give some more general guidelines about getting into the role-playing games hobby. Obviously I haven't been able to cover all the possibilities, but what I hope I've done is to point out that the hobby is friendly and welcoming, and it is only through lack of organisation and misunderstanding that it may appear alienating to newcomers.

For further information of fandom, you should write to: 20 Years On, Ian Shaw, c/o 20 Winifred Road, Coulsdon, Surrey, CR3 3JA
or Paul Mason, 16 Corncrake Close, Sutton Coldfield, W Midlands B72 1HY.

The latter will also answer general enquiries on the role-playing game hobby.

Paul Mason

Press Cuttings

We're back to normal this month, with a decent number of zines to review. The FRP zines still seem to be thin on the ground, however, and none of the leading zines produced an issue in time for Christmas.

We got the third issue of **VACUOUS GRIMOIRE**, and this zine is still improving. The series of article on writing computer adventure games continues, and it should prove useful to anyone who is considering writng one. There are the rules for a new game called **Darts** (!), part 2 of the Palace of Thorgon, an AD&D adventure, plus reviews, etc. All in all, not a bad magazine. Also relatively new is **SUPERHERO UK** from Simon Burley, now on issue 2. There is plenty of advice on running superhero campaigns, two scenarios, a new superhero team, supervillains, and much more. If the IMAGINE Superhero special (#21) stirred your interest, then Superhero UK is the place to look for more advice and support.

A new fanzine, the only one this month, is **STARQUESTER**. It certainly tries to fit a lot of material into each issue, with articles for **Traveller, RQ, D&D, Call of Cthulhu** and **Warhammer**! The material is, perhaps, not on the same level as the best frp zines, and the art and layout leave a little to be desired, but it is a good first issue. I am not sure that a number of different columns for each game is a good idea, as this limits the format of your zine, and inevitably produces some poor material. If you have to fill an RQ column each issue, then you are going to have problems when there is no good RQ material on hand. I know that some prozines use this format, but that is another reason for avoiding it — who wants to be a cheap version of IMAGINE or **White Dwarf**?

Still, you can run a long-lasting fanzine by sticking to the same format, as **SEWARS** 22 shows, celebrating four years. There is a short interview with Avalon Hill, a **Gamma World** scenario, and the usual **AD&D** scenario, plus reviews and news. SEWARS may not be the best zine available, but its editor does produce a regular and reliable fanzine, which can be counted on if you want AD&D hardware.

There is a feeling among a lot of the older and more traditional postal gamers that the personal zines which are springing up are not part of their hobby. These new zines tend to run very few games, and concentrate on chat and discussion; with the views of the editor and friends making up most of the content. Personally, I prefer a fanzine that you can read, rather than one consisting of pure game reports, and the personal zines do carry some of the best writing in fanzines.

JAWZ, which stands for Just Another Warwick Zine, is another of the new breed. Its last issue was called **Swansea With Me**, in fact, and it comes from Alex Zbyslaw. Most of the zine is taken up with a reprint of an essay on religion, and Alex's views on the same. There are also write-ups of an frp session, and chat from Alex's life. Meanwhile Denis Jones' **SECOND FIVE YEAR PLAN** continues with lots of music reviews, and the **United** game.

The original **SWANSEA WITH ME** (Matt Williams) still lacks the character and interest that **Tales from Tanelorn** had. Matt seems to be devoting more time to games, and less to the chat and humour side of things. Still, some of the games are good, with a **Dancers at the End of Time** game starting soon, the rules for postal **Spanish Maine**, and the recipe for Rainbow Chocolate Cake! **GROUND ZERO** is Neil Hopkins' zine, and another of the frp/chat/postal games type. Most of the zine is chat, reviews of Games Day, films and letters. The latter brings up an interesting point from Gordon Rycroft — that fandom is a cliquey and elitist set of people, who deliberately set themselves up as being better. This is know as the 'conspiracy theory of fandom', and is, of course, utter rubbish. FRP fandom is open to anyone who is interested enough to take part in the zines and the conventions. There is a group of friends, most of them zine editors, who jokingly call themselves the Rolegaming Elite. But this is only fun, and the organisation has no real existence, and even the controller doesn't know he has been elected! Don't let the cliquey appearance of fanzines put you off trying them — you'll find they are nothing like that, honest!

Back with the traditional postal gaming zines, we have **MAD POLICY** 102, and it is the usual pleasant mix of reviews, letters and games. **NMR!** 55 sees Brian Creese in a contemplative mood, as he finds himself having less and less time to run the zine. Postal zines do take up a lot of time, especially something as large and well-organised as NMR!, but it would be a shame to see the magazine fold, or lose its variety of interesting chat. We can only hope Brian can find the time to continue.

TTYF INTERNATIONAL 26 celebrates two years of plugging **Tunnels & Trolls**, and considers the American Threat, will Britain become the 51st state? Still, even this worry doesn't stop the usual mix of games and light-hearted chat.

PSYCHOPATH comes to an end with the latest issue, but the usual features covering SF, comics and the international games scene will carry on in Wallace Nicoll and Doug Rowling's new zine **Prisoners of War**, which is nice to know. Mike has built up a good stable of contributors in Psychopath, and it would be a shame to see them all out of print.

MASTERS OF THE PRIME actually sticks to the proper title for a change, and continues to feature **Baseball Wars, Diplomacy, Judge Dredd** and **En Garde!**

HACKING TIMES, that staunch publication of the Greenwich Young Liberals, has undergone a change, and now looks like a real zine! Well, it is now A5, much fatter, and seems determined to offer a wide variety of games, reviews and chat. If you are quick, you will have the chance to vote in their variants poll, as Dylan has said he'll hold it open for IMAGINE readers. This is to decide which game variants will be run through HT, so if you fancy playing an obscure Diplomacy variant such as Middle Earth VIII or Geophysical Diplomacy II, here's your chance.

HOPSCOTCH offers plenty of non-Diplomacy games, of course, everything from **Kingmaker** to **Mystic Wood**.

SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL from Trev Mendham relays the news that Nick Kinzett, the man responsible for rehousing games when a zine folds, has won this year's Pimley Award — after Les Pimley, a well-known and liked postal gamer who died prematurely a number of years ago. It is awarded to the person judged to have contributed most to the hobby over the years. Nick is a deserved winner.

Last, and probably least in size, is **WALAMALAYSIA GAZETTE** 48, complete with reprinted cartoons and an efficient Diplomacy service.

Before I finish this month, I would just like to request some feedback from you lot out there, the people supposedly reading this column. Do you find it helpful? Would you prefer a different format? Any comments and ideas, especially from people who are not involved in fandom, but would like to be, will be much appreciated. Be warned, whoever says 'scrap it!' will be sacrificed to the great fannish GHod GHU!

Note that **Soapbox** is also open to unsolicited contributions; just because you are not a Big Name Fan doesn't mean that your opinions aren't valuable and valid. The column is designed as a forum for gamers to voice their ideas on any aspect of the games industry and the games themselves: you must have something to say? Write to me c/o IMAGINE, or at 4 Smallman St, Stafford, ST16 3PF.

Mike Lewis

No sooner said than... a letter arrived in December bearing the following legend:
'I am an avid reader of your Press Cuttings feature and reading about ***Dagon*** *3 decided to send for a copy. It arrived promptly and I was much impressed by its contents...*
Yours sincerely, Mr B Noys'

Contact Addresses

GROUND ZERO, Neil Hopkins, 8 Highfield Avenue, Harpenden, Herts AL5 5AU (35P); **HACKING TIMES**, Dylan Harris, Greenwich Young Liberals, 76 Haddo House, Haddo St, Greenwich SE10 (37.5p); **HOPSCOTCH**, Alan Parr, 6 Longfield Gardens, Tring, Herts (40p); **JAWZ**, Alex Zbyslaw, B45 Allesley Rd, Rootes Residences, Warwick University, Coventry CV4 7AL; **MASTERS OF THE PRIME**, Bryan Betts, 36 Ingestre Road, Hall Green, Birmingham (40p); **MAD POLICY**, Richard Walkerdine, 144 Stoughton Road, Guildford, Surrey GU2 6PG (45p); **NMRI**, Brian Creese, 256 Canbury Park Road, Kingston on Thames, Surrey KT2 6LG (45p); **PSYCHOPATH/PRISONERS OF WAR**, Wallace Nicoll, 228 Kinell Ave, Cardonald, Glasgow G52 3RU (?); **SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL**, Trevor Mendham, 53 Towncourt Crescent, Petts Wood, Kent BR5 1PH (5 for £1); **SECOND FIVE YEAR PLAN**, Denis Jones, 22 Beechhill Rd, Eltham, London SE9 1HH (?); **SEWARS**, Chris Baylis, 12 The Fryth, Basildon, Essex (60p); **STARQUESTER**, 103 Church Lane, Backwell, Bristol, Avon (50p); **SUPERHERO UK**, Simon Burley, 20 Honeswode Close, Handsworth, Birmingham 20 (50p); **SWANSEA WITH ME**, Matt Williams, 24 Moor St, Coventry CV6 6EQ (40p); **TAKE THAT YOU FIEND**, Kevin Warne, 48 Boscombe Avenue, Hornchurch, Essex RM11 1JG (35p); **VACUOUS GRIMOIRE**, Richard Roberts, 52 Whalesmead Road, Bishopstoke, Eastleigh, Hants SO5 6HL (60p); **WALAMALAYSIA GAZETTE**, Dave Thorby, Flat 63, Cliffords Inn, Fetter Lane, London EC4A 1DX.

The Forum where the amateur press tells the professionals where they are going wrong!

SOAPBOX

This months contributors: ***Chris Elliot & Richard Edwards***

The turn of the year is a time to take stock, to look back at the year just gone and ahead into the future. It has to be said that at present there aren't many encouraging signs for the industry; after an explosive few years, it seems to be losing its way. It's not that there's a shortage of new products, but there is a dearth of new ideas. Look carefully at a glossy new package, and you'll find that deep down it is built on the same foundations as its predecessors, and can't go beyond their limitations. The trouble is, taking the next step forward means taking risks, and that can be an expensive business if the step doesn't work out. Everyone is desperate to keep growing, and everyone is scared that the competition will steal a march on them. After a couple of spectacular turkeys, no-one wants to launch the next one. Products to support existing systems are still coming out, an encouraging number of them from independent companies, while the giants of the industry are looking for the next sure-fire winner.

At the moment, that means tie-ins, and the thinking seems to be that no matter how shallow the product, it will sell if it is based on a successful film, book or TV series. There are a few exceptions, and the traditional American domination is being challenged by one British company in particular, although its recently-knighted head must be holding his breath a bit to see if his latest gamble succeeds or fails. No, it's not Ian Livingstone, nor Don Turnbull for that matter; we are talking about someone in the microcomputer industry, not in role-playing.

In Mike Lewis' **Soapbox** contribution in #21, he drew some parallels between the two. Both grew from tiny bases to become major leisure industries, and both now face the problems of sustaining growth in a crowded market. It isn't stretching the point to think of rpgs as micros, with built-in operating systems, supplements as ROM-based firmware, and scenarios as the software. Companies such as TSR and Chaosium have families of games derived from the same rules, just as micro manufacturers have machines using the same chips. Mike also made the important point that a product, no matter how good it is, can only succeed if it is adequately supported. In no time at all you're into the vicious circle of micros/rpgs selling because people are writing software for them because they're selling because...

This is, in fact, cold comfort for owners of **Dragons** or **Orics**, **The Fantasy Trip** or **Bushido**, who bitch quietly to themselves as they write their own software and wonder why no-one else saw the potential. But then surely it is better in any industry for a few clear winners to emerge, so that buyers can be sure that they aren't backing a system that will be defunct in a few years. In a way, this is true. People can concentrate their efforts on producing a lot of 'software' for a few products, and really exploit their potential. But there is a negative aspect to all this.

Samuel Goldwyn, of MGM fame, once said: "No-one ever lost money by underestimating the intelligence of the American public." Since then, consumer industries the world over have done their best to prove the universal truth of that maxim. Until fairly recently, gamers could afford to feel smug, because we were part of a revolution, weren't we? These games weren't of the play-'em-half-a-dozen-times-over-Christmas-and-throw-'em-away variety; they could go on for years, bounded only by the players' imaginations. That was their potential. But it is too much to expect that more than a minority of players would have the time and inclination to become self-sufficient, and therefore what started as a 'cult' hobby became a major force in the gaming industry, as software was written to support the original games. This means that the way the game developed depended a lot on the quality of what was produced by the industry, and although a lot of good stuff has appeared over the years, there have been been disturbing signs of Goldwynism creeping in. One of the problems of rapid growth is that it is difficult to sustain unless you can tap new markets or expand the ones you have. In practical terms, this means diversifying your product range, or widening your range of customers.

Now, you don't have to look far for examples of role-playing games companies coming out with more traditional games, but this has not been the big growth area. What has expanded is the younger end of the hobby, so that the average gamer is now more likely to be at school than at University. This is no bad thing, since every hobby needs new blood, but a lot of the new products seem to have been aimed at the lowest common denominator of the new age group. To put it bluntly, they're designed for those players whose state of mind will always be under 11, no matter how old they actually are.

You can get a certain mileage out of this sort of stuff, and everyone used to be into it at one time, so let's not be too rude about the plastic figures and the rub-down transfers. No, the real danger is that some people will never get beyond this stage, and that the hobby will be seen as something for kids, and will be abandoned before its potential is realised. It's as if micros were just machines for playing **Space Invaders**, or as if people wouldn't read Tolkien because they had once read **Massage Parlours of Gor** or **Conan The Meter Reader** and thought they were typical of fantasy fiction.

Even leaving aside the question of software, there isn't a lot to be complacent about when it comes to the rules themselves. People are still basing games on Z80s, fighting shy of changes. That isn't to say that a lot hasn't been done with the later generations of the **D&D** or **Runequest** games, but the time is surely ripe for the next step forward, the QL of the rpg world; with multi-tasking, windowing, and user friendliness.

The toy market is notoriously fickle, and putting all your eggs in that particular basket could be an expensive mistake. Anyone who cares about rpgs wants to see them developed, not just marketed. Long term, the only worthwhile business is repeat business, and you only get that with quality products. So, what are we going to get in the future, state of the art, of a state of decay?

Chris Elliot & Richard Edwards

Modules Suitable for the AD&D Game

This month we playtested a few non-TSR scenarios usable with AD&D...

The best of the bunch was **Within the Tyrant's Demesne**, part of the **World of Haven** campaign from Gamelords Ltd. As a campaign module it was not possible to playtest properly, but I would say it is well worth the price tag. The 48-page booklet gives brief details of the Samil kingdom but mainly concentrates on the capital city of dhar Ankhes. Many of the city's inhabitants and buildings are described but where the module really scores is in the wealth of detail about the various political, religious and criminal factions all vying for power. The complexity of who is helping/fighting whom and why, means that if the module is to be used in anything like the intended detail a large wall chart of what's going on is essential. My only criticism is that the whole thing could have been laid out a little more clearly.

Lair of the Freebooters is another campaign module set in the World of Haven. Its format is similar to WtTD in that brief details of the large area concerned are given and most of the booklet is taken up with descriptions of a major settlement, in this case the pirate stronghold of Sharlits Hole. Details of various pirate captains and a couple of scenarios are also given, as well as ship statistics which, although explained, really need **Thieves Guild 6** (a piracy special) to be used to the full. LotF has the feel of piracy on the Spanish Main with catapults instead of cannon, and magic being incorporated in the form of ship's mages and magical ammunition for the catapults. I have no great desire to bring pirates into my AD&D games but if you do, LotF plus TG6 for ship to ship combat rules etc are a good place to start.

Thieves Guild 8 & 9 are part of the Thieves Guild series of rules and scenarios from Gamelords. TG bills itself as the first adventure series devoted to thief characters in frp and although this doesn't preclude other character classes, the scenarios do tend to favour thievish abilities. TG1 contained all the basic rules needed to play, and several scenarios, while subsequent issues have held a combination of scenarios and rules additions. TG8 contains a section expanding rules for missile weapons, details of highway encounters, a rescue scenario and part 1 of an 'epic' 2-part scenario which is concluded in TG9 — which also includes a further rescue scenario. The missile rules are comprehensive and though not directly incorporable into AD&D would provide an excellent starting point for any rules expansions the DM may wish to add. The scenarios are all very good though some need a little extra work to flesh them out. However the main problem is that all the character/monster statistics are given for TG rules and although individual conversions are not too difficult the 40+ required for a scenario and 130+ for a campaign module can mean quite a lot of work.

Cloudland from Grenadier Models Inc is appalling! It consists of a castle with five dungeon levels beneath it and is severely overcrowded with many different types of monsters who spend their entire lives sitting in their rooms waiting to be killed by adventurers. But if you play *'you see a monster':'I kill it'* type dungeons, you will probably find Cloudland quite acceptable and have no problems using the minimal statistics given for monsters etc.

Traveller Supplements

The Desert Environment continues Gamelords' series on various planetary environments. It gives quite comprehensive rules for dealing with desert situations.

This environment has more applications than another in this series, The Mountain Environment. The desert could be used in many situations, eg a downed starship. Furthermore, many quite hospitable planets have deserts, our Earth for example.

The supplement is well researched, but it must be emphasised that some of the rules systems in the book are deadly. I would advise referees to allow players full access to the book before putting them in a desert situation; in such places quite trivial actions can mean life or death.

Duneraiders continues Gamelords' policy of releasing environment and adventure together. The players operate a mining vehicle on the desert world of Tashrakar. They battle against natives, the elements and opposing corporations before victory is finally attained.

The adventure is well presented and laid out, and is comprehensive. The planetary background is detailed, with lots of maps and a deck plan of the mining vehicle provided. At all points of the adventure the referee has all the information needed; this is rare nowadays, with so many scenarios needing work on them

Something which should make a good game with a little work is **Evil Ruins** published by Mayfair Games. There are, however, several aspects of the module which let it down, in particular the small, barely legible and sometimes incorrect maps. There is also a race of intelligent sword-using spiders who, having no hands, carry the swords strapped to one of their legs! How did they strap them on? and more pertinently why didn't the module designers give them a pair of hands in the first place?! The monster statistics are given virtually in AD&D form although there are quite a few non-standard monsters. The whole thing would also feel a lot better if the monsters etc were beefed up and the scenario used for, say, 6-8th level instead of the 2-5th suggested.

In conclusion, some advice. Have a good idea of what you want before you set out to buy anything, look at the goods and ask other people if they know anything about them and if you're not sure — save your money!

Chris Hunter

Chill

Eldritch horrors, spine-chilling excitement, a world where unknown things sneak and crawl, and creep, and slither in the darkness of a moonless night. Sounds just like **Call of Cthulhu**, doesn't it?

Those canny fellows of Pacesetter certainly know a good bandwagon when they see one. And onto it they have leapt with considerable enthusiasm. Call of Cthulhu has shown that a well-written, well-designed game based around a novel but appealing theme can work wonders. While **Chill** obviously does not deal with the works of H P Lovecraft, it nevertheless fits into the same genre of roleplaying. Its theme is gothic horror, the home of the vampire, the ghost and the ghoul, which derives from Walpole, Poe, Stoker et al, but was popularised by Universal, and more recently by Hammer. In this game the whole gamut of supernatural creatures is linked by the concept of 'The Unknown', a mysterious plane or universe in which they dwell. This source of evil is combatted by SAVE, the secret organisation to which all player characters belong. While this limits the opportunities available to the players, it also makes sure that they always have a goal, a motive for adventure. Furthermore the game can be set in any country, at any period of history after the formation of SAVE in 1844.

For your money you get a box containing a 64-page Campaign book, a 32-page 'Horrors of the Unknown' book, a rather tacky map of the world, an introductory folder and introductory scenario (**Terror in Warwick University**) and some atrocious little cardboard counters.

Pacesetter have clearly tried to write the game in such a way that a complete novice to rolegames will be able to pick it up easily. The introductory folder explains role-playing games and prepares the players for their first adventure. Unfortunately, the introductory scenario just doesn't make the grade. Not only is it full of arbitrary manipulation (eg *'Do not allow the players to go up the stairs at this time'*), but it has omissions, unnecessary repetition and poor explanation in places. I'm dubious of its merits as a means of introducing newcomers to rolegaming.

The rules themselves, however, are fairly competent — following the current trend towards well-structured sets of rules with one fundamental mechanic. Percentage chance of achieving something is given either by the appropriate skill, or the Basic Attribute (aka *requisite*). Rolling over this indicates that the attempt has failed. The amount by which a character rolls under the ability/skill is cross-referenced on a table to give the quality of the result.

There are comprehensive sections in the rulebook for dealing with such minutae as visibility, disease, poisons, interaction with Society and 'The Art' (actually Magic, though the designers seem curiously loth to admit it). These are of moderate complexity and should easily be mastered by anyone who can handle the AD&D game. Style-wise, however, they tend to feel a little like wargaming rules, especially in the combat section (understandable, one might feel, but several popular rolegames manage to avoid this).

In general, the rules make rather dry reading, despite attempts to enliven the text with 'jokes'. These simply come across as patronising. I also felt that the coverage of the creatures from the Unknown (in the 'Horrors' booklet) was a little on the dull side.

Still, if you fancy a game of investigation with gothic horror overtones, and you don't much care for H P Lovecraft's Cthulhu mythos, then Chill would be the game to buy.

Paul Mason

Product Information for p44-5

Places of Mystery (£4.95 each) and **Islandia Campaign** (£6.95 each) from Companions are distributed by Chris Harvey Games, PO Box 100, Bath St, Walsall, W Midlands.

Hype from Virgin Games, 2-4 Vernon Yard, Portobello Rd, London W11, costs £24.95

Hodder & Stoughton's **Peter Pan** costs £9.95 from bookshops.

before they can be played.

Duneraiders could be played without Desert Environment, though the players risk losing a lot of the feel of being on a hot, arid world. The great drawback of buying both supplement and adventure is that it will cost a lot of money, largely because Gamelords produce them in the USA. If you can afford the price, these two are well worth a try.

Steve Nutt

Product Information

Within the Tyrant's Demesne, Lair of the Freebooters, Thieves Guild 8 & 9 and the Traveller supplements are from Gamelords Ltd, still without UK distributors. 18616 Grosbeak Terrace, Gaithersburg, MD 20879, USA

Cloudland from Grenadier Models is distributed by Games of Liverpool, 89 Victoria Street, Liverpool. Price £5.50

Evil Ruins from Mayfair Games is obtainable through Games Workshop, 27/29 Sunbeam Road, London NW10. Also from Games Workshop is Pacesetter's **Chill**, £12.95

Additional Scenarios for Cry Havoc — Book One costs £2.95 from Standard Games & Publications, Arlon House, Station Road, Kings Langley, Herts.

Addresses are given for information only; these products should be available from your local games shop

Additional Scenarios for the Game of Cry Havoc - Book One

This 22-page A5 booklet is merely a collection of six scenarios for use with the **Cry Havoc** game. As such it involves only the maps (ie village and crossroads) and the pieces of that game. The scenarios are well-presented with maps showing starting positions of pieces, the 'plot' and victory conditions.

However, I do not see much need for such a product; I would expect that even players with only limited imagination are able to construct scenarios of this very ordinary standard. The only other point of interest is the mention of using metal figures for playing Cry Havoc and the recommendation of Essex miniatures for this purpose. Surely if a player is going to buy figures he may as well buy a set of table-top rules to go with them...

Mike Dean

Places of Mystery

The **Places of Mystery** from Companions in the USA are sets of detailed descriptions of various settings commonly encountered adventure roleplaying. Sets I and II, **Chilling Chambers** and **Alluring Alcoves**, are indoor settings such as chapels, gaols, barracks, etc; while III, **Sylvan Settings**, is slightly different in nature, consisting of mini outdoor scenarios. The intention with each of these sets is that the GM can remove each description and place it in his notes wherever he decides. All three sets are designed to be compatible with any Frpg system.

The copies which I have of sets I and II come loose-leaf three-hole punched, while III is a booklet; neither format is particularly useful for the UK GM but with a bit of cutting and hole-punching it isn't too difficult to find homes for various sections where you require them.

The descriptions themselves are extensive, and a great deal of work has obviously been put into them. However, sometimes this is taken to the extent of absurdity. For example, in connection with the chapel the players are informed that *'In the centre of the right-hand rail area a pair of scratches 1/8" wide and only a hair's breadth apart. They appear to have been made by teeth.'* The GM has some extra notes on this, which read *'The scratches were put on the rail by a bored child who spent too much time on his knees in prayer.'* Whether detail of this nature is necessary even for the GM is open to question!

Of the three sets, the third is probably the best and most useful, but much of the material in sets I and II is equally so, especially for the novice GM.

Mike Dean

Islandia Campaign

Four modules from the Companions, **The Curse on Hareth, Plague of Terror, Brotherhood of the Bolt** and **Streets of Gems** form an interlocking series of adventures and are designed to be multi-system compatible, just like the **Places of Mystery**. They are also similar to the latter in format.

As a believer that presentation is almost as important as content where sales promotion is concerned, I was somewhat dismayed when I turned to the first of the modules and found the poorest cover I have seen on a professional product. As a potential buyer I would have put this module back on the shelf, but instead I went on to find a very well presented and detailed module.

It is interesting to note what is meant by compatibility in this case. Multi-system compatibility is not achieved here by long lists of alternative stats for each system, but instead by the use of a simple set of characteristics for NPCs which can be adapted with reasonable ease to specific systems. Combat stats are worked out using a 'standard broadsword' of average damage 5·5 (ie 1d10). Creating stats for NPC magic users in multi-system scenarios of this type is, of course, a difficult task at best. However, a description is provided of each MU's powers (eg 'has the ability to control weather', 'can control people, particularly in restraining their voluntary actions', etc) which although vague provide sufficient detail for the GM to flesh out the MU with specific spells from the system in use.

Bearing in mind the considerations discussed above, it should be obvious that these modules are not of the 'ready-to-play' type, but require a fair degree of work by the GM in setting up. This is probably just as well, however, because these modules are fairly complex in places and require a greater depth of understanding than the usual run-of-the-mill scenario.

Interior layout of these modules is such that ease of reference by the GM is facilitated: full width columns are intended to be read out to players with little alteration (as usual these suffer from over-flowery and unnatural use of language), half-width and double columns provide information for the GM, insetting from both margins indicates information on treasure and traps.

The modules' main plots involve: the release of the village of Hareth from a curse; ending the tyranny over the Manor of Wentworth; conflict with a strange cult of black arts; discovery of the trafficking of human sacrifices. There is a myriad of sub-plots within each module, and each ties in nicely with the next in the series. There are a further two currently available.

Finally, a word to the GM: these modules will provide your group with many sessions of play, but only if you are prepared to put in the necessary time and work for conversion and full understanding of the plots running through each of them.

Mike Dean

Hype

There could hardly be a more apt choice for Virgin Games' first product than **Hype**, promising all the slime and grime of the pop world. An enjoyable romp in the classical family games mould, it has an obvious slant towards the young and the odd ageing hippy.

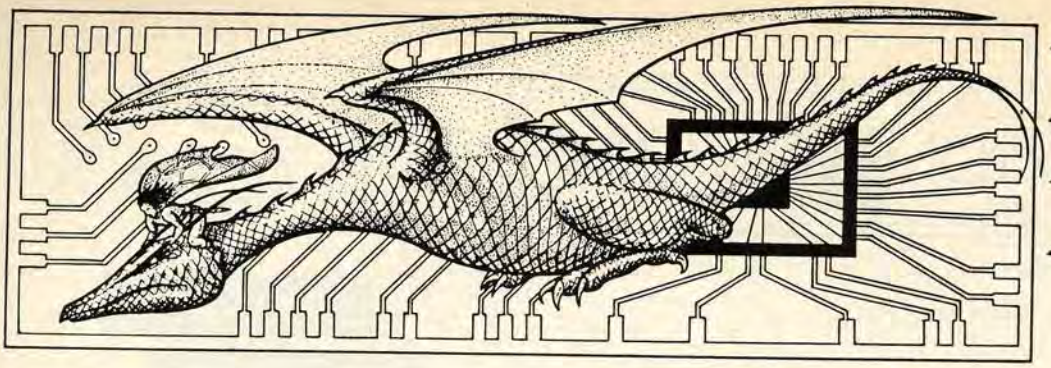
First, play the 12" single, *Hype* by the Technos, to get yourself into the mood. Reinforce this by examining the gaudy and attractive components, so numerous you'll need a lot of space to accommodate the game comfortably. Hype has a playing time of about three hours with the maximum six players.

Each player must form a band (Heavy Metal/Reggae, etc) and hype it from playing lowly local gigs and living in a mini-van to the luxury of a jet-plane lifestyle. The eventual aim is that Number 1 slot. Naturally, a band must be formed before a potential hit single is cut. Each band member has an individual card which shows the type of music he or she can play and the value of that skill; only five musician cards can be held. Band personnel changes frequently in the early stages, in search of the highest band total possible. Every musician card has an illustration of that person. It is a pity some pictures are duplicated, but the use of ridiculous puns for names partly compensates for this. One only has to look at *Ed Off* to see the perfect embodiment of the Heavy Metal drummer!

Hype's circular board is eye-catching, if a little flimsy. There is an inner ring of squares used by the fledgling band, and an outer ring used by the manager when the 'Big Time' beckons. In the centre is a map of Britain used during touring, showing major venues. Movement is regulated by dice and chance cards. Finally, there is a Top 20 chart up which singles jostle as managers hype and bands tour, desperately searching for that top slot to secure victory. It is when players get their singles in the chart that Hype gets really dirty. 'Hype' cards may be used to pull down your rivals' records. It's a rough business.

This game is tightly structured, easy to learn and play. Yet aside from Hype cards and blocking tactics on the touring map, there is little player interaction or strategy. In fact, Hype can get monotonous in its later stages until finally no-one cares who wins, so long as *someone* wins. This is the curse of games where the dice rule. However, Hype doesn't pretend to be a serious analysis of the subject. It has its tongue firmly in its cheek... and it is fun! After numerous playings the joke might lose its sparkle, but for an alternative to your usual gaming, or as a jaunt for the whole family, Hype has a lot going for it. So, if you want to get hip — get **Hype**!

Dave Perry



Micro Reviews

PETER PAN

Peter Pan is a well produced and presented Adventure game which should appeal to all who have read J M Barrie's book (both children and adults). A copy of the book is provided in the package and one is strongly advised to read this before embarking upon the Adventure. In fact, should you seek assistance in the course of the game and ask for help, you are merely given the very sound advice to read the book — which can be very frustrating at times.

The game follows the usual pattern of Adventures in that you must acquire or do certain things before you are able to proceed to the next stage. Most of the normal commands and abbreviations are accepted but speed is of the essence. This is not a game for ditherers. You are constantly being exhorted by Tinkerbell to hurry up and this is advice which should be heeded. Time does not stand still while you are deciding what to do next and undue delay can be, and often is, fatal.

The Adventure follows the plot of the book very closely and the player encounters all the familiar characters such as Captain Hook, Wendy, Tinkerbell, the crocodile, the Indians and Pirates. You, of course, take on the character of Peter Pan himself.

You start off in the children's bedroom where you are looking for your shadow. When you find it you must then discover how to fasten it on again, which can be quite a problem until, of course, you read the book. When you have successfully dealt with your shadow you must find some fairy dust before flying off to Neverland.

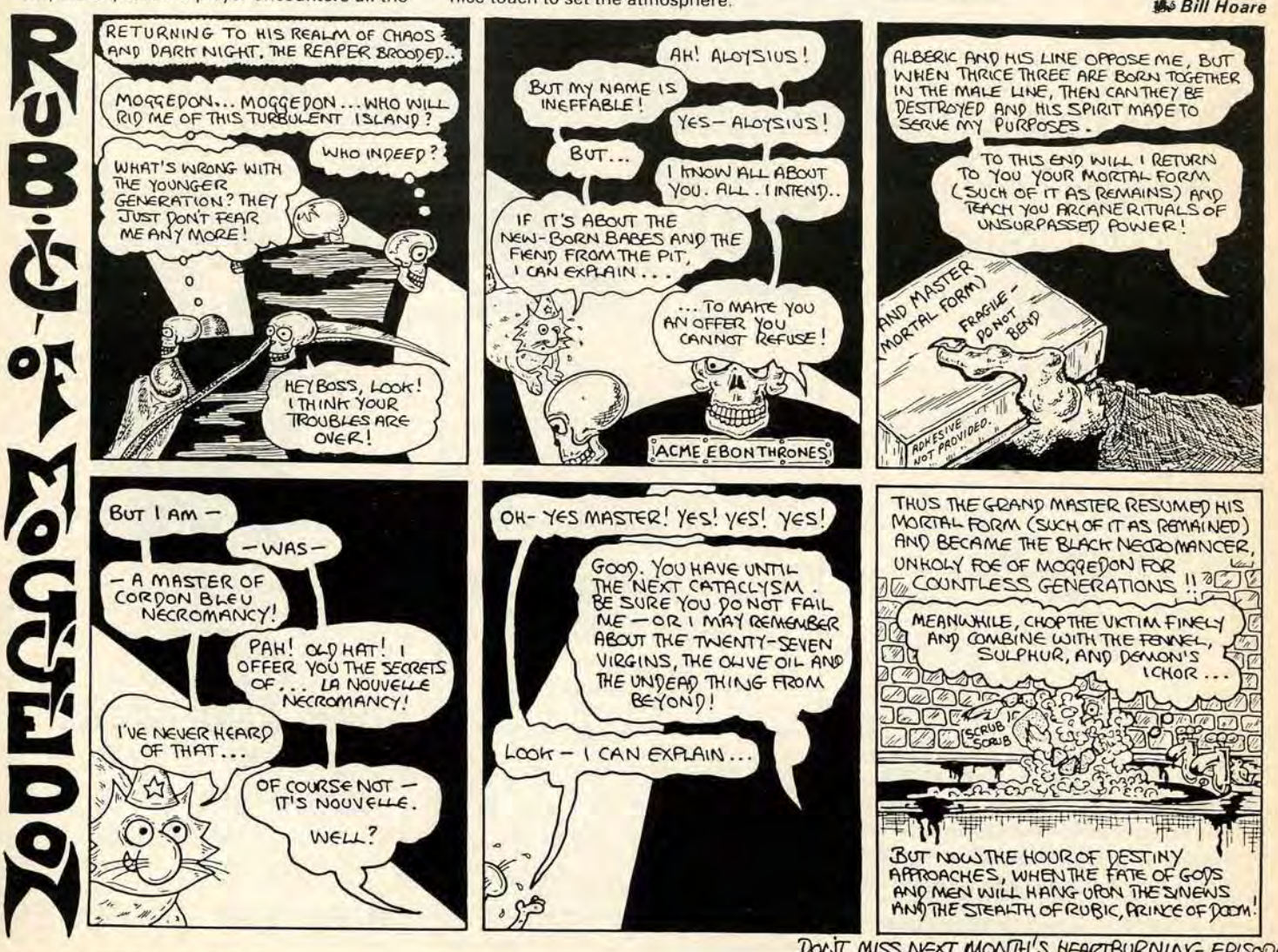
The graphics which appear at each location of the game are really quite excellent, although they are slow in their execution. However, should you be impatient, they can be switched off and this speeds up the course of events considerably. A simple form of animation also serves to give the display a certain appeal. For example, when Peter Pan, Wendy and the Boys are approaching the island, the fin of a shark is seen cruising menacingly across the bay — a nice touch to set the atmosphere.

Peter Pan is a relatively easy Adventure game to adjust to as far as playability is concerned. Nevertheless, in conjunction with reading the book, it is also very satisfying to play. Though, having said that, you have to be very careful to avoid undertaking the Ultimate Adventure as it is called. Pirates, poison, sharks, drowning, falling over cliffs, and the Crocodile are all example of the fate of the unwary. Be on your guard!

Upon successful completion of the Adventure a flashing password will appear on the screen. A prize is offered for the first 50 correct entries submitted. Published by Hodder & Stoughton, an admirable feature of this product is the fact that through J M Barrie's Peter Pan Bequest, his royalties go towards the children of Great Ormond Street hospital.

All in all, Peter Pan is an excellent Adventure which should appeal especially to the younger enthusiast and as such it is to be highly recommended.

Bill Hoare


DOOM
RETURNING TO HIS REALM OF CHAOS AND DARK NIGHT, THE REAPER BROODED..
MOGGEDON... MOGGEDON... WHO WILL RID ME OF THIS TURBULENT ISLAND?
WHO INDEED?
WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE YOUNGER GENERATION? THEY JUST DON'T FEAR ME ANY MORE!
HEY BOSS, LOOK! I THINK YOUR TROUBLES ARE OVER!
AH! ALOYSIUS!
BUT MY NAME IS INEFFABLE!
YES— ALOYSIUS!
BUT...
I KNOW ALL ABOUT YOU. ALL. I INTEND..
IF IT'S ABOUT THE NEW-BORN BABES AND THE FIEND FROM THE PIT, I CAN EXPLAIN...
... TO MAKE YOU AN OFFER YOU CANNOT REFUSE!
ACME EBONTHRONES
ALBERIC AND HIS LINE OPPOSE ME, BUT WHEN THRICE THREE ARE BORN TOGETHER IN THE MALE LINE, THEN CAN THEY BE DESTROYED AND HIS SPIRIT MADE TO SERVE MY PURPOSES.
TO THIS END WILL I RETURN TO YOU YOUR MORTAL FORM (SUCH OF IT AS REMAINS) AND TEACH YOU ARCANE RITUALS OF UNSURPASSED POWER!
AND MASTER MORTAL FORM)
FRAGILE - DO NOT BEND
ADHESIVE NOT PROVIDED.
BUT I AM —
— WAS —
— A MASTER OF CORDON BLEU NECROMANCY!
PAH! OLD HAT! I OFFER YOU THE SECRETS OF... LA NOUVELLE NECROMANCY!
I'VE NEVER HEARD OF THAT...
OF COURSE NOT — IT'S NOUVELLE. WELL?
OH- YES MASTER! YES! YES! YES!
GOOD. YOU HAVE UNTIL THE NEXT CATACLYSM. BE SURE YOU DO NOT FAIL ME — OR I MAY REMEMBER ABOUT THE TWENTY-SEVEN VIRGINS, THE OLIVE OIL AND THE UNDEAD THING FROM BEYOND!
LOOK — I CAN EXPLAIN...
THUS THE GRAND MASTER RESUMED HIS MORTAL FORM (SUCH OF IT AS REMAINED) AND BECAME THE BLACK NECROMANCER, UNHOLY FOE OF MOGGEDON FOR COUNTLESS GENERATIONS!!
MEANWHILE, CHOP THE VICTIM FINELY AND COMBINE WITH THE FENNEL, SULPHUR, AND DEMON'S ICHOR...
SCRUB SCRUB
BUT NOW THE HOUR OF DESTINY APPROACHES, WHEN THE FATE OF GODS AND MEN WILL HANG UPON THE SINEWS AND THE STEALTH OF RUBIC, PRINCE OF DOOM!
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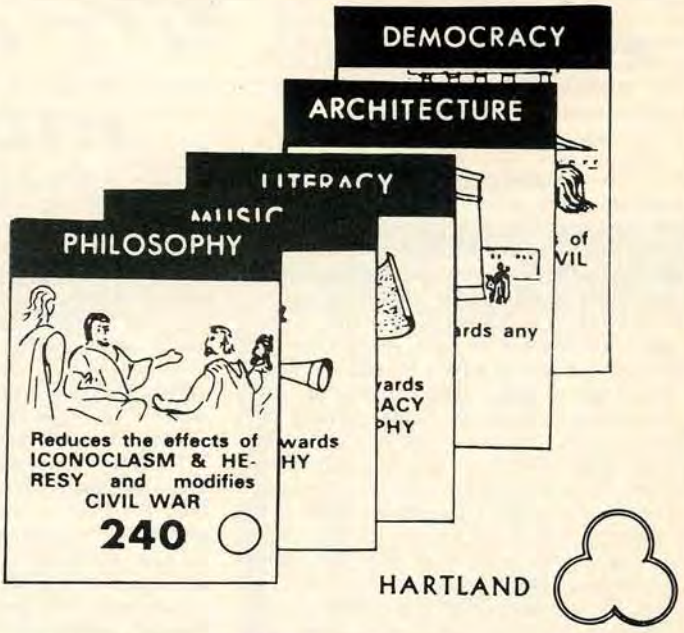

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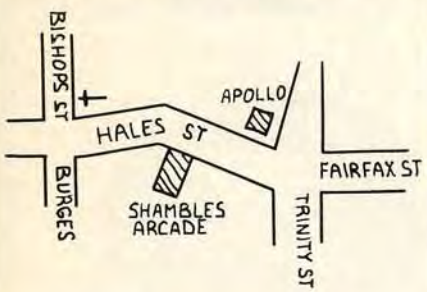

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UK 6 — ALL THAT GLITTERS....

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Fantasy Media

*Colin Greenland, author of **Daybreak on a Different Mountain** and co-editor of SF magazine **Interzone**, reviews the latest additions to the fantasy/SF media.*

Giorgio Moroder, better known as a king of disco producers, has taken it into his head to refurbish one of *the* great SF movies, Fritz Lang's **METROPOLIS** (Virgin, PG). Originally released in 1926 by nervous distributors who cut it from three hours to two, no complete print of the film exists, so Moroder has worked from seven separate sources to assemble this re-mix, which even includes stills at one point to represent a lost passage — though it's still, curiously, no more than an hour and a half long. Needless to say, he's also supplied the movie with a thumping modern soundtrack, but it's not as irritating as I expected, except for a handful of totally unnecessary songs by the likes of Pat Benatar, Jon Anderson and Freddie Mercury. Someone else along the way has decided to tint the print, on the principle that black-and-orange (or occasionally black-and-blue) *must* be more dramatic than black-and-white. It isn't; but again it doesn't matter.

It's a measure of the sheer power of Lang's vision that it survives this heavy-handed cosmetic modernizing quite intact. Inspired by his first sight of Manhattan, Metropolis is a dark dream of the city of 2026, where the idle rich live in penthouses and play in rooftop pleasure gardens while the faceless workers toil in the machine caverns far, far below. When Freder Fredersen, son of the technocratic tyrant, falls in love with Maria, the good angel of the workers, his steel-hearted father orders Rotwang, the original mad scientist, to fashion a robot-Maria which will lead the workers astray. He does; it does; they do; and the resulting riot is the most superbly-choreographed urban cataclysm ever filmed.

I finally caught up with **ROMANCING THE STONE** (Fox, PG), and if it's still around when this reaches print, suggest you do too. Joan Wilder (Kathleen Turner) makes a packet with her exotic romances like *Love's Wicked Kiss*, but actually lives a very dull and lonely life in a New York apartment with a cat called Romeo. Suddenly, into her mailbox pops a treasure map which her brother-in-law has died to keep out of villainous hands; and her sister phones from Colombia, *in* those same villainous hands, begging Joan to bring the map, and tell no-one. Before she knows what's happening, Joan is stranded in the jungle with two vicious antique thieves and an unscrupulous secret policeman after her; and one of her high heels is broken. Just then, along comes an American adventurer, Jack T Colton (Michael Douglas), who gallantly offers to guide her to the nearest phone — at the price of all her remaining Traveler's Checks. Good-humoured, sparky stuff in the manner of **Raiders of the Lost Ark**.

More cerebral, offbeat fantasy from Jacques Rivette in **L'AMOUR PAR TERRE** (Cannon Gala, PG), a tale of strange encounters and elusive magic. A pompous playwright hires two actresses for an unfinished autobiographical play, to be acted in his own weird mansion. Upstairs, Emily hears waves breaking behind a peeling door. Inside a solitary crab inches across the empty room. Other rooms foretell the future. Is it Paul, the sardonic conjurer, who is responsible? Whose dream is this anyway? A teasing mystery, with wry, sensitive performances from Geraldine Chapman and Jane Birkin.

In 279 BC an army of Celts invaded Greece and looted the oracle of Apollo at Delphi. With careful research into Roman and Celtic historical sources, Peter Tremayne has turned the story into a heroic fantasy, under the title **RAVEN OF DESTINY** (Methuen, £1.95). In the heat of battle Bran Mac Morgor, Champion of King Conchobar, breaks a sacred code and is punished by exile — and even more devastatingly, by the curse of Morrigu, goddess of death and war. Accompanied by his faithful charioteer, Fionn, Bran goes raging and sullen into Gaul, where he encounters treachery, ambition, and desire.

Tremayne writes serviceable prose, with no great imagination, but a steady sense of the kind of principles and pride that would have driven a man like Bran Mac Morgor. Women don't get such a sympathetic deal, however, despite the presence of Berlewen, an ace charioteer; Tremayne tends to describe them as 'perfectly-proportioned' and that's their lot.

Barrington Bayley's **THE ZEN GUN** (Methuen, £1.95) is a space adventure with hosts of quirky ideas including stellar samurai, bio-engineered super-pigs, and an Ultimate Weapon made of wood. Sounds like Douglas Adams territory, but it's not comedy. In fact Bayley has a whole new theory of physics to expound, and does so in meticulous detail. A shame, then, that you have to work to extract the good bits from some very clumsy writing generously seasoned with misprints.

Colin Greenland

Letters

Thank you, thank you. It seems to be the overwhelming feeling of all those who sent in their Readers' Survey forms that this part of the magazine is one of the most popular. Whilst I would like to believe that this is because you all admire my witty rejoinders, I'm sure the real reason is that you like the letters. So, let's see who has written to ***IMAGINE*** *magazine (letters), The Mill, Rathmore Road,* ***CAMBRIDGE CB1 4AD*** *this month.*

Matt Connell, Cambridge: I've played D&D for a number of years, and have been watching with some sadness the declining standards of TSR modules and game aids. Five years ago, when buying a module you could at least be sure that it would stick to the spirit, flavour and — above all — the rules of the game. All this is changing. The American designers of the **Dragonlance** 'epic' seem to have decided that creating your own role for your character and making decisions is old-fashioned and that what the public wants is a pre-designed character with only one obvious course of action available.

DL1 and DL2 are badly constructed, boring to play, have unclear maps and unbelievable NPCs (the first encounter with Goldmoon is like a scene from *The Sound of Music*). Worse than this, they are riddled with errors (eg, the pre-generated ranger hasn't got the ranger minimum requirements).

The whole thing is just a big step in the tradition of bendy plastic figures, gimmicky invisible ink and magic viewer modules. The only good material being released at present is the ever excellent UK series, which sticks to the spirit and the letter of the rules and provides imaginative and enjoyable adventures.

Has TSR Inc sold out as far as the serious gamer is concerned?

Hardly for me to say. As I've said to a number of concerned individuals over the last few weeks, I don't personally believe the plastic figures or the cartoon series are going to do any gamer any harm; I can't get offended by something which is so clearly aimed at a totally different audience. But if there were a decline in module standards, that would be more serious. So, what do people think of the recent releases? Is Dragonlance your thing or not?

Jez Keen, Stockport: I don't think 'for players of the DUNGEON & DRAGONS® game' across the bottom left of the cover of the SuperHero issue (#21) was entirely appropriate. Mind you, without it, the casual browser might have dismissed it as a comic and gone for November's **WD**. Another thing — this word Xmas is blatantly commercial; the only Christmasy thing inside was **For Whom The Bell Jingles**. The legend might have been justified if you had given away free party hats.

I see, this is going to be one of those negative months, is it...?

Jez Keen: Other than that, it was a very nice cover. Nice issue, too. I hope the purists read the comics articles.

Me too. I think most IMAGINE readers enjoy the occasional foray into different games systems, and the comics/superhero gaming theme is proving to be a major growth area in the hobby (maybe that's where all the creative effort is going, Matt). Certainly, your average reader much prefers a good article on a new game system to something like ***Alignment, Personality and Religion****.*

Venetia Lee, Sheffield: Alignment is a useful (but not indispensable) tool for role-playing. It should not be used by DMs as a strait-jacket to control players. It is in this light that I would like to consider Lew Pulsipher's article in #20. One of the key words used in the article was 'enforce'. Lew clearly sees players and DMs in opposition, and a game as a confrontation between the two. Players are to be punished if their behaviour does not fit certain preconceptions. Perhaps here we see the thug syndrome in refereeing.

The essence of role-playing may be seen as the construction of a plausible, amusing personality around a set of numbers and within a preconceived environment. Thus, having rolled the statistics 10, 17, 7, 11, 12, 15, I choose female, elven, magic-user, and considering the city environment of the campaign, decide where she works and lives, give her a pet cat and a passion for the theatre. Her intelligence should keep her on the ball in dangerous situations, but as she is clearly unwise, she will be somewhat foolish — if not downright silly — and very vain about her looks. I still haven't even thought about alignment. I wonder 'is she basically kind-hearted?' — decide that she is in fact rather selfish, and, as I enjoy playing chaotic types, she ends up as CN. And there she is. The original and all subsequent numbers are subordinate to the personality of the character and are useful only as an arbitrator of action.

Using the numerical strictures of experience points in the realm of personality as Lew suggests is to confuse the mechanics with the persona. A DM should never need this. A setting for a role-playing game should provide characters with suitable friends, temples, trainers, guilds, etc. A character who strays from alignment will find this support disappearing.

This assumes that alignment drift should be penalised. One of the faults of the system is that it precludes change, and for effective role-playing change may be necessary. A character chaotic in youth may adopt a more neutral stance with maturity. Changes of this sort should be accommodated without the penalties attached to gratuitous change.

Thanks, Ven. There were other letters that made the same points, and made other criticisms of the way Lew implied 'control' of characters through reward and punishment. I don't know if Lew is representative of the average American gamer, but superficially there does seem to be a move in the States towards a greater level of control by DMs, whereby the art of good refereeing is seen as the manipulation of the players along the central thread of the plot in the least overt way. Over here, we tend to demand that our DMs respond to players' desires, designing their campaigns in such a way that unexpected moves can be 'covered' by a reasonable sequence of events. An odd division of ideas, but quite central to the way the game is played on both sides of the Atlantic. Is this why Matt is finding more in the UK series of modules than in others? Don't you love the level of debate in this magazine?

Peter Blanchard, Woking, Surrey: Enough of these so-called controversies, which are merely the products of those people who cannot escape the limitations of the rule-book.

Take a look at any of the current prozines. In **IMAGINE** 20 we see a plethora of articles on clerics; surely none of these said anything new. Much of what has been said has been common

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Letters

practice for years. As for Lew, who cannot separate the actions of his players from their characters, there is little hope for the man.

Surely rather than dictate the law, the prozines should be encouraging more thought about **role-playing**. Or does it suit the prozines to have thousands of idiots out there just waiting for the next, exciting, fun-packed issue.

Yep. Mind you, we don't think of them as idiots, and we don't believe we ignore role-playing as energetically as you seem to think. How do we preach 'the Law'? How can we devote 56 pages to the finer aspects of role-playing? We don't pretend we get it right all the time, so if you've got some ideas, you'd better follow this next laddies' example and let us know.

Paul Trapper, Bristol: I was very impressed by #20; brilliant cover, and it was even better inside. I was greatly enlightened by the work on the clerical class. Also, **Prince of Thieves** was good, but did he have to die in the end?

Although it would be difficult to improve on this, I would like to see articles on traps; also painting figures and as much from Katino as possible.

We'll see what we can do. You might find a few ideas next issue to whet your appetite for traps and such-like, Paul, and I'm sure we won't be able to keep Katino away from his blank scroll paper for too much longer.

Marc Hanson, Pinner, Middx: In my observations of AD&D players, I think I've discovered three different types. I find the ideas of 'specials' very clever, but, if my theory is correct, it offers an explanation for the rather mixed bag of views you got on the Egyptian and Celtic specials.

Stage 1: Tolkien reader; just graduated from Basic; characters over 10th level rolled up with 50 magic items; killed Asmodeus twice; never heard of the Celts and think of Egypt as the home of the funny triangular blocks of stone; use AD&D action figures; watch the cartoon.

*More bad press on the cartoon, eh? We'd best give up on the idea of the **Uni Meets Godzilla** scenario....*

Marc Hanson: Stage 2: Worshipper of the One EGG; discovers campaigns; plays only by the given rules; quasi-medieval society — hence, no time for the likes of Egypt.

Hmmm. Why do I get the feeling that Marc probably falls into the third group?

Marc Hanson: Stage 3: Post 'O' Level, laid-back guys (that's me!); sick of the same old thing; different settings for campaigns, or new games.

My friends and I hope that more of these specials are produced. The scenarios are good, on the whole, the best being **Sethotep**, which deserves an award. The artwork on the covers is always good, but the #16 cover, Sethotep and the other articles made it the best IMAGINE yet. Keep up the good work.

Paul de la Pena, Marton, Cleveland: I really appreciate the stuff you IMAGINE chappies do for the postal hobby; **Chainmail, Press Cuttings** and **Tavern Talk** have all been a great service. Thanks.

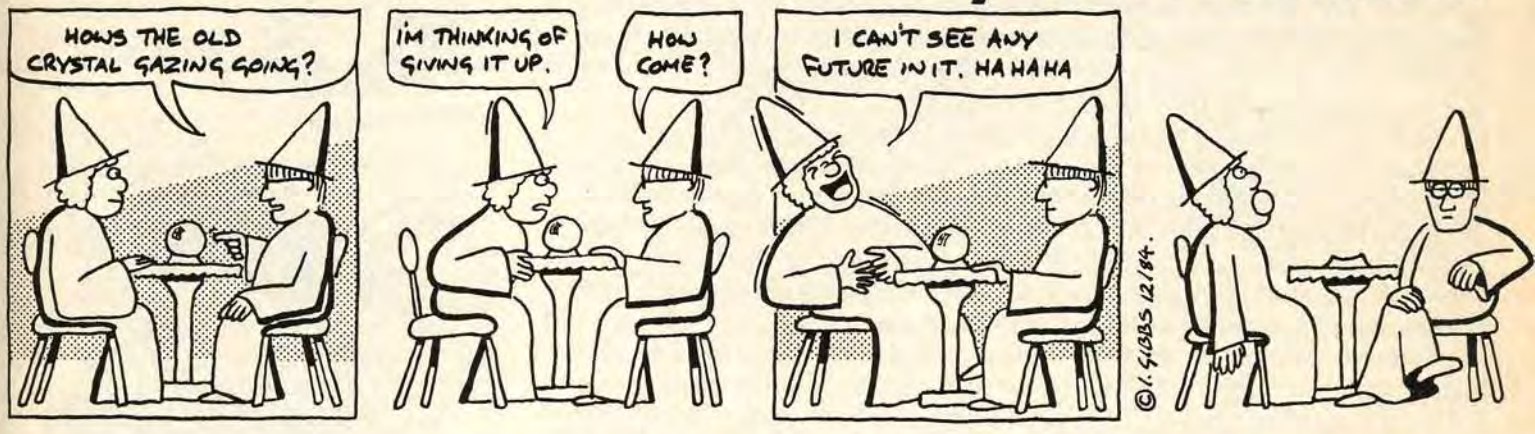
The questionnaire thing — I refuse to fill this out, as I don't think that a series of ticks represents a reader's views. Tell 'em to write letters!

*We do, we do! And sometimes we get loads and loads, and sometimes we have to use letters like yours to make sure we get loads and loads next time. Mind you, next issue we won't have to resort to such subterfuge; join us for the start of **Readers' Revenge**, more commonly known as the results of the Survey. Find out what rude words were used about **Rubic**, find out what even ruder words were used about **Dialog**, hear the cries and wailings for the return of **The Sword of Alabron** and **Tavern Talk** and discover why it is that this remains **the** place to air your views, on just about anything you want to. Or, just send us a Valentine....*

PS – Miami Dolphins for the Superbowl.

Letters edited by Paul Cockburn

VOP by Ian Gibbs



Next Issue

THIEVES!

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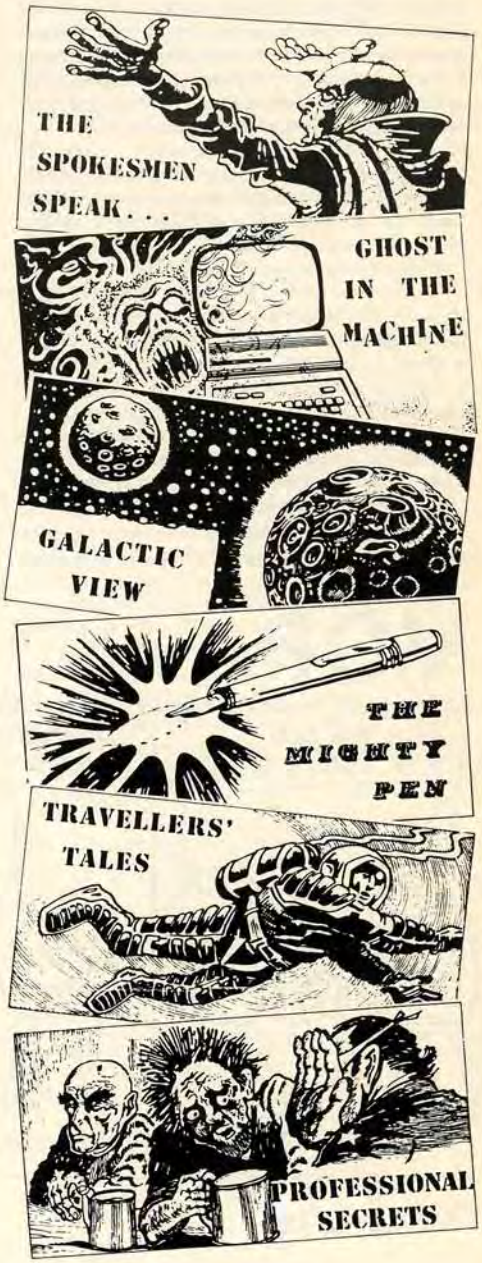

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Being told that you are in the middle of a huge hexagon every time you go for a walk in the country does not help to suspend your disbelief.

A page for the not-so-experienced adventurer

by Roger Musson

Most people running a D&D campaign start off with a dungeon, and the first adventures they run are usually of the underground exploration kind. Such adventures, with their particular traditions of listening at doors, searching for staircases, and so on, are in many respects the heart of the D&D game. These are the most familiar aspects, and to some, almost the only aspects.

However, in a way, this is paradoxical. A party of adventurers does not start its life in a dungeon, but usually in the security of a town or village somewhere in relatively civilised terrain. The dungeon itself is a goal to be reached after a greater or lesser amount of travelling. New DMs often skimp this by having a convenient guide point out the way. Thus players, having rolled their characters and bought all their equipment, are sometimes merely told *'you arrive at the dungeon'* and the adventure proper begins.

There is nothing to stop the game continuing this way indefinitely, given a large enough dungeon. Sometimes it does. But at other times, either the DM/players get tired of the same setting time and time again, or something happens in the course of routine adventuring that directs characters to travel some distance away, to search for something, or on some other mission. And then the DM is faced with the prospect of conducting a wilderness adventure.

Since there are considerable differences between conducting an overground and an underground adventure, it seems appropriate to devote a little time to discussing it. First I shall consider some of the problems of running a wilderness adventure, and then, in a forthcoming issue, offer advice on designing one.

The most basic difference concerns the dialogue between DM and players. The familiar patter of *'10-foot-wide corridor; 30 foot, door on the right, 40 foot, door on the left, passage continues'; 'We go to the door on the right and listen'* no longer suffices. Instead of a nice neat geometrical pattern of corridors to describe, you find yourself with a whole rolling landscape.

One solution is to rely on the hex system for wilderness mapping that the rulebooks suggest. A friend of mine tried this, and gave out descriptions along the lines of *'you are in a plains hex; to North of you is another plains hex; to North-east is a scrub hex, South-east more scrub, South a woods hex,'* and so on. Mapping this was nice and simple (assuming one had been canny and come prepared with a few sheets of blank hex paper), but the idea was not popular. There were frequent cries from the players of *'I'm not in a hex!'* and sarcastic remarks about the strange landscape formation that divided areas up by long cracks in the ground on a hexagonal grid. In other words, the players were being made too aware of the game mechanics. If one is trying to identify with Conan or Gandalf or whoever, being told that one is standing in the middle of a huge hexagon every time one goes for a walk in the country does not help one to 'suspend one's disbelief'. So if you do use maps on a hexagonal grid, I suggest you keep quiet about it, and describe landscape purely in directional terms, eg *'plains to your north, woods to your south'* etc. But note that a hexagonal grid only gives you two of the cardinal directions, so be prepared to translate north-east to east if necessary, should you be asked by the party what they see in that direction.

In fact, I would maintain, using hexes in wilderness maps is quite unnecessary. In the early days, hexagonal maps in games were so much taken for granted that it seemed natural to use them in D&D — indeed, in the first edition rules, the use of a map from a particular Avalon Hill game was recommended. But a little practice shows that using ordinary graph paper or quadrille paper is just as good if not better, and cheaper as well. Hexes are great for regularising the movement of many military units in a conventional board wargame, but in D&D, where one is only plotting the movement of a single party, they are no longer so much of an advantage. If you have a known map scale, and the party is marching east-nor'-east by east, you just need to measure the requisite distance in that direction to see where they get to in X hours' travel.

A word about getting parties lost. The existing rules provide for a random chance of this happening if characters are not following either a recognisable road or trail or a map. If the chance comes up, the party is moved by you into a hex other than the one they intend. Be careful how you employ this. For one thing, it is always more satisfying to let parties get themselves lost by incompetent mapping and slightly confusing terrain than manhandling them in this manner. However, some kinds of terrain are notoriously difficult to traverse in the direction you intend (forest, for instance) in which case these means are fully justified. But never move parties into the 'wrong' hex when it is immediately obvious to them what you are doing. For instance: *'You are on a grassy plain; a few miles to the north you see low hills, to the east you see straggly woods.' 'Good, we head for the hills.'* (DM checks dice and finds the party gets lost) *'You are in some straggly woods.' 'Doh! We said we were heading for the hills, not the woods. Do you think we can't tell the difference?'*

This sort of thing should be avoided. In such an instance, the players are perfectly justified in complaining. The thing to do is to check how players are navigating; if they are using obvious landmarks, there is as little chance of them getting lost as if they were on a trail. If they are using the sun or a compass, they have more of a chance of going astray in between making checks. If the party is simply trying to walk in a straight line across a uniform area, then there is an excellent likelihood that they will walk round and round in circles.

This still works just as well when not using hexes. If I decide a party travelling across an area that I have mapped using graph paper is going to get lost due to inadequate means of navigation, then I can determine the angle of deviation using (say) an eight-sider and reposition them accordingly. Naturally, one doesn't actually tell the party what is happening to them. Let them find that out in their own good time!

Roger Musson

Previous ***Stirge Corner*** *themes are detailed below. To obtain back issues see p48.*

#1 & 3: Introduction to rpgs; #4-5: Beginner DMs; #6-7: Staying alive; #8: Treasure*; #9: Monsters*; #10: Treasure & monsters*; #11: Time & motion*; #12: Role-playing; #15: Mapping*; #16: Scale; miniature figures; #17: DM-ing equipment*; #18-21: Alignments; #22: Languages*

**mainly for DMs.*

Please note that #2, 13 & 14 are out of print.

DISPEL CONFUSION

Role-playing games have rules which are open to interpretation, and this sometimes causes problems when two gamers interpret things differently. ***Dispel Confusion*** *is a column intended to help by providing answers to rules questions.*

At present we mainly answer questions about TSR games; while the answers we give are not fully official we do have contact with the designers and a good deal of playing and refereeing experience.

An answer column needs questions, so send yours to: Dispel Confusion, TSR UK Ltd, The Mill, Rathmore Rd, CAMBRIDGE CB1 4AD. If you don't want to wait for your question to appear in the magazine, please enclose a 9"x 4" SSAE.

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Q. Once a trap is disarmed, would a **find traps** reveal its presence, and would the spell show poison to be part of a trap? *(Advanced)*

A. No, to both parts of the question. A trap simply isn't a trap when it has been disarmed, so its presence would not be shown by the spell. This, incidentally, makes it a good way of cross-checking whether a thief has successfully used the **remove traps** skill on any particular object.

The wording of the spell makes it clear that a **find traps** will only reveal whether a trap is present, and whether it is mechanical or magical. The DMG goes on to say that the nature of the magic involved may also be revealed — alteration, divination, etc. There is no mention of being able to say more about a trap than that it is mechanical — and poisoning a trap is only a modification to its mechanical nature.

Q. If a character is proficient with a normal long or short bow, is he also proficient with the composite short and long bows? *(Advanced)*

A. No. Other games handle the idea of weapons proficiency in a different manner, by allowing characters to become skilled in the use of individual weapons and to 'transfer' a proportion of their skill into related weapons; but in the AD&D game characters are only able to get the best out of the weapons that they have been trained to use — hence the weapons proficiency rules. Related weapons can be picked up and used, but the non-proficiency penalty comes into operation because although basic principles are the same, individual weapon techniques are often quite different.

Q. When casting a **trap the soul** spell, are there any additional effects for using a gem that is more valuable than strictly necessary? *(Advanced)*

A. No. There is no extra benefit — or penalty — from using a 15,000gp gem to trap a 10HD monster. The given value of the gem required is merely a minimum.

The same idea, of course, holds true for all other spells that require valuable components during casting — for example **identify** needs a 100gp pearl, but will work just as well with a pearl worth 200gp or 10,000gp!

Spells that have components that do not have 'values' — items such as rose petals, lampblack, oil, earth and the like — simply require those components. How easy the components are to obtain is up to the DM running any particular campaign, but making components rare, and having a Magical Guild that specialises in their supply, is an excellent way of soaking off excess cash from magic-using player characters!

Q. If a magic user is wounded, is he able to cast any more spells? *(Basic/Advanced)*

A. A magic user cannot complete a spell if he or she is injured while in the process of casting the spell. This falls into the category of breaking the caster's concentration. The idea that magic users cannot cast any more spells once wounded — they cannot concentrate because of the pain — is a 'house rule' that has grown up as an extension of the broken concentration rule. It is one that is less than fair on low-level magic users in particular. It is the process of casting a spell being interrupted by a wound that causes the spell to be stopped, not the fact that a character was wounded several turns ago.

Q. Can a gold dragon use its breath weapon when it is in human or animal form? *(Basic/Advanced)*

A. No. The breath weapon is a physical function of the creature's dragon form and cannot be used when the dragon assumes another shape. It must change back to its original form before it can breathe on adventurers or anyone else. The dragon can use its spells in any of its forms.

Q. Should a player be told that his or her character is fighting a lycanthrope? For example, are the adventurers told that they have met a werewolf or just a wolf? *(Basic/Advanced)*

A. Unless the characters see a lycanthrope changing form, how will they know that they are fighting such a beast? The DM may choose to drop hints that they have met with a wolf, or whatever, that seems more intelligent than normal, but that is all. It is up to the characters to discover exactly what they have encountered.

The first knowledge that the characters may have that they fought a lycanthrope is when one (or more) of their number has restless nights during the period of the full moon — and the local villagers start looking for the were-creature. Assuming that none of the characters connect the two pieces of information, an imaginative DM could even have the infected player character(s) join in the hunt for the creature, without ever knowing that the thing they are hunting is closer than they imagine!

Q. In what circumstances can a cleric of a Good or Lawful alignment cast an **animate dead** spell or something similar? *(Basic/Advanced)*

A. Spells like **animate dead** are usually associated with evil clerics, mostly because of their unhealthy connotations. However, there are circumstances under which a Lawful cleric might need to cast such a spell. Take, for example, the case of a village or castle which is under siege by overwhelming numbers of chaotic evil nasties. After the first assault there are lots of bodies lying about, and

another attack is expected. The defenders have no chance of survival unless they have some allies....

The result is that the local cleric spends the night meditating on the spell **animate dead**, and then casts this on the bodies. The ends (defence of the good people of the village/castle) justify the rather distasteful means (an **animate dead** spell). Of course, in some campaigns the DM may rule that clerics of certain religions — say a cleric of a harvest god — will be completely unable to cast this kind of spell.

Q. Are there female dwarves? *(Basic)*

A. Yes, otherwise there wouldn't be any more dwarves at all! The rules make no distinction between the sexes, so dwarven characters can be female. Whether or not female dwarves have beards is open to debate. The rules give no hints, and female dwarves are very rare in fantasy literature.

Q. Can an entrant in a joust wear magical armour or use a magical lance? The rules on jousts state that a character must wear full plate mail and carry a shield. *(Companion)*

A. The section in the Companion rules on tournaments makes it quite clear that combatants cannot use magical equipment in a field list, but does not say anything about jousts. However, it is reasonable to assume that a knight using magical armour or weaponry in a joust would be recognised as doing so, and be opposed by a similarly equipped opponent or asked to use non-magical gear for the duration of the tournament. Jousts are supposed to be about individual prowess and honour, not who owns the best suit of armour.

Q. Can a Dwarf with an Intelligence of 9 actually speak Dwarf, Gnome, Goblin, Kobold, Common and his Alignment tongues, even though his Intelligence isn't high enough to learn these extra languages? *(Basic)*

A. Yes, he can. The extra languages that Dwarves can speak at the beginning of their careers are those learned 'at their mother's knee'. The Intelligence limits do not apply to these languages that Dwarves — and Elves — can learn. If demi-humans are lucky enough to be blessed with high intelligence they can, of course, learn additional languages as anybody else can, becoming compleat linguists.

However, if this doesn't suit your campaign, change it! See p16 for a discussion of this very point.

Jim Bambra, Mike Brunton, Phil Gallagher & Graeme Morris

GAME COMPANY *Club Special*

Last issue and this, we bring you a full listing of the clubs advertised so far in the Game Company column. Here, N-Z by area (and the ones we missed last time!). If your club doesn't appear, or you can't find one to join in your area, or if it's wrong, write to this page.

HAROLD WOOD Wargamers play rpgs at the Scout Hut in Queens Park Rd, Harold Wood, Sundays 2-7pm. Contact Ian Lee of 49 Fleet Avenue, Upminster, Essex for up-to-date details.

HOCKLEY, Essex: AD&D players in this area should go to Hockley Youth Centre on Monday or Tuesday at 7pm to see if the free club is still running. Or contact Rick Auger, 11 Foxfield Close, Hockley.

HORSHAM: Oops! Last month we printed an out-of-date contact address. You should be writing to Andy Norman at 69 Swaines Way, Heathfield, E Sussex.

LEICESTERSHIRE: The Beserkers are a small group of chaotic **D&D** and **AD&D** players who welcome new players who can stand being killed. Contact Geoff Haynes, 7 Wreake Walk, Oakham, Leics.

Covent Garden, LONDON: Sigma Games Club meets every 2nd and 4th Sunday, 3.00 - 11.30pm at the Piazza. Non-members were paying £1.50 a session when we got details of this club.

NEWCASTLE: Contact Stuart Ketchin, 20 Woodburn Avenue, Fenham, Newcastle-upon-Tyne 4, for details of a club meeting once a month at players' houses.

NEWQUAY: The Lords of Cahli are a group of gamers in their 'teens — apart from Big Kev, who is over 30 — who play **D&D, Traveller** and **Gamma World** every Sunday at players' houses. Contact Kevin Robinson (High Lord of Cahli) St Mary's, West Pentire Rd, Crantock, Newquay, Cornwall.

NOTTINGHAM & DERBY Boardgames Club meets Thursdays, 7 - 10.45pm, at Queens Walk Community Centre. Ring Nigel Hawthorn on 0602 53313.

OXFORDSHIRE: Carterton Wargames Club was said to meet at Brize Norton Community Centre, Carterton, nr Witney, to play all rpgs and wargames.

PENKRIDGE, Stafford: Arrowstorm meet Mondays and Fridays, 7-11pm to play **AD&D, Traveller, RQ,** etc. Ring Rob on 078 571 5230 after 6pm for details.

PORTSMOUTH: South Hants Association of Down & Out Weregamers (SHADOW) meets 2-10pm every Saturday at Portsmouth Community Centre, Buckland. They have 20 members playing **AD&D, RQ** and **Gamma World** games, plus board wargames etc. Contact Mark Byng, 17 Church Rd, Landport, Portsmouth, Hants.

PRESTON: The Dark Crypt Gaming Club plays **AD&D, D&D, RQ, Traveller** and **Car Wars** games. It meets at members' houses, 2-7pm on Saturdays; interested parties should contact Peter Thompson, 60 Beechwood Avenue, Fulwood, Preston.

RAGLAN: Players interested in playing fantasy/SF RPGs, or computer games, should contact John Tribe, Hill House, Raglan, GWENT NP5 2GT. The 15-strong club meets weekly; anyone interested is welcome.

REDDITCH Barbarians meet every other Thursday 4-9pm at Redditch Palace Theatre, Alcester St, to play all kinds of rpgs and wargames. Richard Eaton, 154 Exhall Close, Church Hill, Redditch. Tel 64860.

RUGBY: The Dunsmore Dragonslayers meet twice weekly at secretary James Leaviss' school to play **D&D, RuneQuest, T&T, Traveller,** etc. Members get 10% discount from a local games dealer. Write to James at 130 Ashlawn Rd, Rugby CV22 5EP.

SCARBOROUGH Wargames Club meets every Saturday at the Technical College annexe, 2-6 pm, to play many different games. Membership is £2.50 for a year, or one can go to individual sessions for 20p. Contact John Hinchcliffe, 5 Futurist Buildings, Foreshore Rd, Scarborough.

SHEFFIELD Runelords meet every Monday from 7pm at the Victoria Hotel — a 42 or 53 bus ride from town towards Hillsborough and Parson Cross. Contact Pete Armstrong, 23 Bramley Lane, Sheffield.

STOCKTON-on-Tees: **Elmwood Wargames Club** meets on Tuesdays, 6-10pm, at Elmwood Community Centre, with average attendance 25 players age 11 to adult, playing **AD&D, Traveller, RQ, Top Secret** and **Arduin Grimoire** games. Contact Andrew Pointon, 17 Seamer Grove, Hartburn, Stockton-on-Tees.

SURREY Adventurelords is a new(ish) club, formed so that rpgers and wargamers can meet others interested in their hobby. For further information contact Paul Wedell (Chairman), 127 Chaldon Way, Coulsdon, Surrey.

SWANSEA University Boardgames and Role-Playing Society meets on Tuesday evenings in term time in the Union House Bar to play **AD&D, RQ, C&S, CoC, Diplomacy, 1829, Railway Rivals**. Contact Iain Bowen, 305 Neuadd Sibly (on campus).

THAMESDOWN: Darren Hallett, 12 Lancaster Rd, Wroughton, Thamesdown, Wilts will give you details of a club which meets to play the **AD&D** game on Friday evenings and Sunday afternoons. Last time we heard there were five 14-year-old players.

WADURST Wargames Club is looking for gamers in the Wadurst area interested in **D&D, AD&D, Knight Hawks** and **Middle Earth** games as well as wargames. Call Antony Digman on 0892 883786.

WORTHING Games Club meets on the first and third Sundays of the month at 2pm in the Trades Council Building, Broadwater Rd, to play **AD&D** and **Top Secret** games. Contact Matt Haydon, 56 Bulkington Ave, Worthing, Sussex.

WREXHAM: Contact Craig Cartmell (0978 264068) to see whether his club still meets fortnightly at Wrexham Library Arts Centre to play rpgs.

YEOVIL Roleplaying Games Group is a new venture hoping to provide a link for the ever-growing number of gamers in the area. All are very welcome to join. For details contact Matt Doye on West Coker 2829.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

GamesFair '85 will be at Reading University Friday to Sunday **29-31 March**. See the form on p33 of this magazine for more information.

Yorcon: **5-8 April** at Dragonara and Queens hotels, Leeds. GoH author Gregory Benford. Enquiries to Christine Donaldson, 46 Colwyn Road, Beeston, Leeds LS11 6PY.

Eurocon: in Eindhoven, **12-14 April**, will feature frp and wargames, Diplomacy championship, etc. For details write to Jan Feringa, Radijsstraat 11B, 9741 BJ Broningen, Netherlands.

Leicester Polytechnic (War)games Society has fixed provisional convention dates at **20-21 April**. For tabletop wargamers and role-players: if you are interested please write to The Treasurer, Leicester Polytechnic (War)games Society, Students Union, Leicester.

Sol III 85 will be at the Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool **3-6 May**. Guests Mark Lenard (Sarek) and SF authors James White and Lisa Tuttle. Fee £15 for weekend. Registration forms and details available from 39 Dersingham Avenue, Manor Park, London E12. Please enclose a SSAE.

I don't intend to make this nostalgia time, nor do I necessarily advocate a yearning for the 'good old days', but a few days ago I spent some very pleasant hours browsing through old magazines. Not, I hasten to add, erudite political journals nor even the type of publication found lurking on top shelves out of reach of kids, but the early issues of those amateur magazines which rode in when the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game was in its relative infancy.

Normally, one's reactions to scanning something quite old is mild amusement and a feeling of 'heavens — weren't we stupid in those days to accept this stuff?' But not in this case — in fact quite the contrary. The early days of the hobby were blessed with a goodly number of sensible, thoughtful people (fortunately, with a sense of humour too) who also had the enviable ability and energy to put their sense and thought into writing. I am proud to have a small collection of real classics, and though the 'fanzine market' today is well blessed, too, I would like to spare a few thoughts this time for those worthy pioneers who first put the D&D zine on the map. And did it with a vengeance. I haven't got them all, but I believe I have the best.

Not in any particular order, let's start with **The Beholder** by Guy Duke and Mike Stoner. Unfortunately issue 1 is undated but #5 is the August 1979 issue so TBH first saw the light of day early in that year. At the time issue 9 appeared, this was (hard to believe) the only British D&D zine, but Games Day had already been held for the fifth year running, which shows how early those doughty pioneers Ian and Steve got their act together. TBH went on to issue 25 in its initial format, then got taken over. I can't remember by whom, or what happened, since my collection stops at that point and I can only conclude that it folded. A sad loss.

Pre-dating TBH was **Underworld Oracle** by Lou Nisbet and Phil Alexander. Issue 1 was July/August 1977 but sadly this excellent publication survived in its initial format only until issue 6 (coyly and strangely dated May/August 1978). Issue 7 was in A4 format and glossy, but so far as my collection goes this was the last issue. Another sad demise. UO, like TBH, was immensely readable; where UO scored was in the invention of the Halls of Testing — sort-of-solo modules unparalleled before, or, I believe, since.

One that nearly made it, but not quite, according to my records, was **Illusionist's Vision** by Mike Ferguson, Gavin Denton and occasionally others. Issue 1 was dated May/June but annoyingly mentioned no year. From the contents I am pretty sure it was 1978. IV showed very great promise, but regrettably did not survive very long (due, I suspect, to the age-old problem of shortage of money).

Let's go across the Atlantic for the next, and in its time one of the very best — **The Dungeoneer** by Paul Jaquays and Mark Hendricks. Issue 1 (July/August 1976) set the pattern for eight extremely readable and entertaining issues spanning the next few years (I see I have two copies of issue 8 — 52 A5 pages; anyone who wants it should send Paul Cockburn a name and address, and I will pluck the winner out of a hat on the first day of GamesFair 1985). With issue 9 there came a change for the worse; this was published by Judges Guild (one-time perpetrator of modules for use with D&D/AD&D; they did good work initially but failed to improve — even Paul Jaquays joining their staff had no lasting effect). Paul was still the editor, but the magazine never really made it after then. Judges Guild is now dead and so, I suspect, is TD, but I hope Paul is still active — he was one of the leading lights in the early days of the hobby and a man of considerable creative talent.

You'll see some common features above — take-over of an amateur magazine by a professional or semi-professional outfit seems to be the kiss of death, despite good intentions. There's nothing to replace the person who runs the zine for fun and pride (whereas the professional people ask that it pay for itself — in most cases out of the question, as amateur publishers have known for years).

Back to the UK. I'm going to mention **Chimera** here, not because it was a D&D fanzine (it wasn't, it was a general games zine) but because in its heyday it contained reports on The Pits Of Cil. Now The Pits was the finest postal D&D game in the UK (and, so far as I am aware, in the world). Run by the redoubtable Dave Tant, it was highly imaginative, entertaining and funny. Accounts of the zany activities of the various parties exploring the dungeon depths (each player led a party, so at any time there may well have been twenty parties combing around down there) were published in Chimera every issue courtesy of Clive Booth, its publisher.

The first issue I have retained is #37 published in December 1977, so Clive started in 1975 or so. My collection runs up to issue 70 (Christmas 1980) but the magazine went on after The Pits had finished before folding in 1982. Clive gave us a damned good magazine for a long time and contributed greatly to the hobby. His humour was particularly... well, let's say 'individual' — his spoof rpg Swingers & Swoppers will be remembered by some forever. And in the reports on The Pits there were many crazy incidents, but none so crazy as the incident in which the thief in Bill Howard's party was stolen...

I see I haven't mentioned **Trollcrusher, The Wild Hunt** or even the incomparable **Alarums & Excursions** — three APAs. Or even **News of the Bree**. I would, but the editor of this is a hard man...

So, finally, to the last mention, and for this I'll have to dig back to February 1975. At that time, for the punitive sum of 10p, you could buy issue 1 of **Owl and Weasel**. This was, I think, the very first offering in the general games field other than my own **Albion**. Its perpetrators, who seem fond of choosing the oddest names for their publications, were Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone, then sharing a grotty (believe me: I saw it) flat in a seedier London suburb in their attempt to get a thing called Games Workshop off the ground. O&W went on to #25 (April 1977, 20p) before being supplanted by something called **White Dwarf**, of which it has been said... But the reason I include O&W here is in issue 5, from which I quote: *'a new game and concept... DUNGEONS & DRAGONS is not exactly a table-top game... I watched a game in progress... and was fascinated.'* And that's where it all started in the UK. You know the rest.

There are some 'names' mentioned here — people who were prime movers in getting this hobby on its feet. Sadly, some have moved on to other things, but they have left their ineradicable marks. They, and those who are still around, deserve our praise and thanks. The newer blood — those who joined more recently than the late 70s — contain creative and talented forces to be reckoned with. But the old school worked in the face of all sorts of obstacles (remember what is now fondly called 'The Collector's Edition'? It was all we had in those days) and they can't be surpassed. ***D J Turnbull***

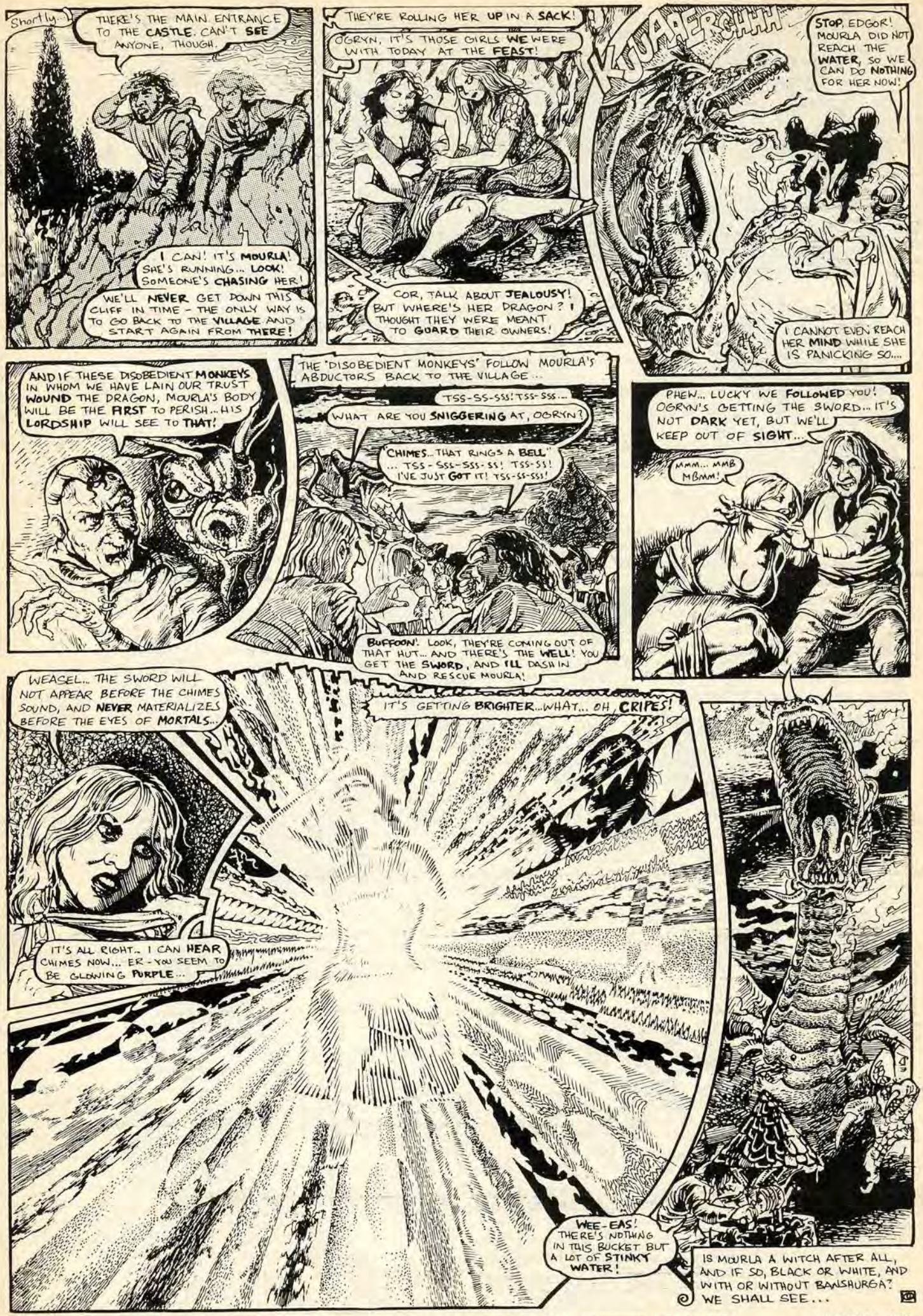
PHALANX

by R. Grenville-Evans

CHUNK the SEVENTH: THE SEA-WITCH

(WEASEL THE FAIRLY CLEVER AND OGRYN THE BIG HAVE ENCOUNTERED OTHRUNU THE MYSTIC IN DUNGEONS THE DAMP....NOW, BACK IN THE VILLAGE, THEY ATTEND THEIR FEAST, AWAITING MOURLA, WHO WILL TELL THEM WHAT THEY MUST DO NEXT... AND WHO SHOULD STROLL IN BUT THE MUCH TALKED-ABOUT BANSHURGA DANASKMI, THE HIGH PRIEST WHO TURNS OUT TO BE ALMOST AS WIDE...

HAIL, LORD BANSHURGA!
HAIL!
HAVE A SEAT!
HAVE A BREW!
WHERE ARE OUR GUESTS? I WISH TO MEET THEM!
AT THE END, BY THE SIDE DOOR WITH TWO WENCHES... THEY DON'T LOOK A BIT HAPPY...
IF HE DID CROAK ONE OF HIS OWN MEN, HE'LL KNOW WE WERE UNDER THE CASTLE!
WEAS, WHY DON'T WE SLIP OUT THE BACK WAY?
OTHRUNU SAID WE MUST WAIT FOR MOURLA... WE'LL HAVE TO BLUFF! HERE HE COMES - ACT DRUNK!
NO, DO NOT RISE, FRIENDS - I PASSED BY MERELY TO ENSURE THAT YOU ARE ENJOYING YOURSELVES
OH-HIC-WE ARE THAT, SHIR...
HOW, NOT ARF.. BUHP!
BUT THEY'VE HARDLY TOUCHED THE ALE, LORD BANSHURGA!
I AM GRATIFIED YOU ARE BEING SO WELL LOOKED AFTER - NOW I BID YOU GOOD DAY... I HAVE DUTIES TO FULFILL!
NONSENSE - THEY'VE BEEN PARTAKING OF MY BREW ALL DAY... HERE, LET ME REPLENISH YOUR TANKARDS...
MOURLA! OH, DON'T LET US DOWN, OGRYN!!
WELL, I...
I HAVE OTHER THINGS TO DO ALSO...
WAIT FOR ME..
YER, NISHE TO MEETCHER, COCKY!
HE ISN'T FOOLED... I WONDER WHAT HE KNOWS OF MOURLA
LISTEN... HE KNOWS OF OUR VISIT TO THE CASTLE TODAY, SO WE MUST PLAY THIS GAME VERY CAREFULLY. THE SWORD WHICH SHALL PROTECT YOU AND SLAY THIS DRAGON IS IN THE WELL-BUCKET... STRIKE ONLY AT THE HEART...
MOURLA... WHY CANNOT ALL THE PEOPLE IN THE VILLAGE HELP US?
NO, MOURLA. DO NOT TELL HIM. HE WILL NOT COMPREHEND...
THEY CANNOT... OH... PLEASE, IF YOU WOULD HELP US ALL, TRUST OTHRUNU AND I...
OF COURSE WE TRUST YOU.
FROM DEEP INSIDE THE CASTLE, OTHRUNU AND EDGOR OBSERVE AND ADVISE....
MOURLA... BANSHURGA HAS CONVINCED THE TWO GIRLS WHO HAVE JUST LEFT THAT YOU ARE A SEA-WITCH... THEY WILL TRY TO PREVENT YOU FROM REACHING THE WATER... GO NOW!!
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, ME DEAR?
YES! I MUST GO! REMAIN HERE - FEIGN SLEEP UNTIL YOU HEAR THE CHIMES - THEN DO WHAT YOU MUST!
BUT...
FUNNY GIRL, ISN'T SHE!
MM... CHIMES, EH...? THAT SEEMS TO RING A BELL. TELL YOU WHAT, I DON'T FANCY SITTING HERE UNTIL NIGHTFALL, DO YOU?
I TRUST MOURLA - BUT I'M WITH YOU!
RIGHT - LET'S SNEAK OFF TO THE BEACH...


Shortly...
THERE'S THE MAIN ENTRANCE TO THE CASTLE. CAN'T SEE ANYONE, THOUGH.
I CAN! IT'S MOURLA! SHE'S RUNNING... LOOK! SOMEONE'S CHASING HER!
WE'LL NEVER GET DOWN THIS CLIFF IN TIME - THE ONLY WAY IS TO GO BACK TO THE VILLAGE AND START AGAIN FROM THERE!
THEY'RE ROLLING HER UP IN A SACK!
OGRYN, IT'S THOSE GIRLS WE WERE WITH TODAY AT THE FEAST!
COR, TALK ABOUT JEALOUSY! BUT WHERE'S HER DRAGON? I THOUGHT THEY WERE MEANT TO GUARD THEIR OWNERS!
KUAAERGHH
STOP, EDGOR! MOURLA DID NOT REACH THE WATER, SO WE CAN DO NOTHING FOR HER NOW!
I CANNOT EVEN REACH HER MIND WHILE SHE IS PANICKING SO....
AND IF THESE DISOBEDIENT MONKEYS IN WHOM WE HAVE LAIN OUR TRUST WOUND THE DRAGON, MOURLA'S BODY WILL BE THE FIRST TO PERISH... HIS LORDSHIP WILL SEE TO THAT!
THE 'DISOBEDIENT MONKEYS' FOLLOW MOURLA'S ABDUCTORS BACK TO THE VILLAGE...
TSS-SS-SSS! TSS-SSS...
WHAT ARE YOU SNIGGERING AT, OGRYN?
"CHIMES... THAT RINGS A BELL" ... TSS-SSE-SSS-SS! TSS-SS! I'VE JUST GOT IT! TSS-SS-SSS!
BUFFOON! LOOK, THEY'RE COMING OUT OF THAT HUT... AND THERE'S THE WELL! YOU GET THE SWORD, AND I'LL DASH IN AND RESCUE MOURLA!
PHEW... LUCKY WE FOLLOWED YOU! OGRYN'S GETTING THE SWORD... IT'S NOT DARK YET, BUT WE'LL KEEP OUT OF SIGHT...
MMM... MMB MBMM!
WEASEL... THE SWORD WILL NOT APPEAR BEFORE THE CHIMES SOUND, AND NEVER MATERIALIZES BEFORE THE EYES OF MORTALS...
IT'S GETTING BRIGHTER...WHAT... OH, CRIPES!
IT'S ALL RIGHT... I CAN HEAR CHIMES NOW... ER - YOU SEEM TO BE GLOWING PURPLE...
WEE-EAS! THERE'S NOTHING IN THIS BUCKET BUT A LOT OF STINKY WATER!
IS MOURLA A WITCH AFTER ALL, AND IF SO, BLACK OR WHITE, AND WITH OR WITHOUT BAWSAURGA? WE SHALL SEE...

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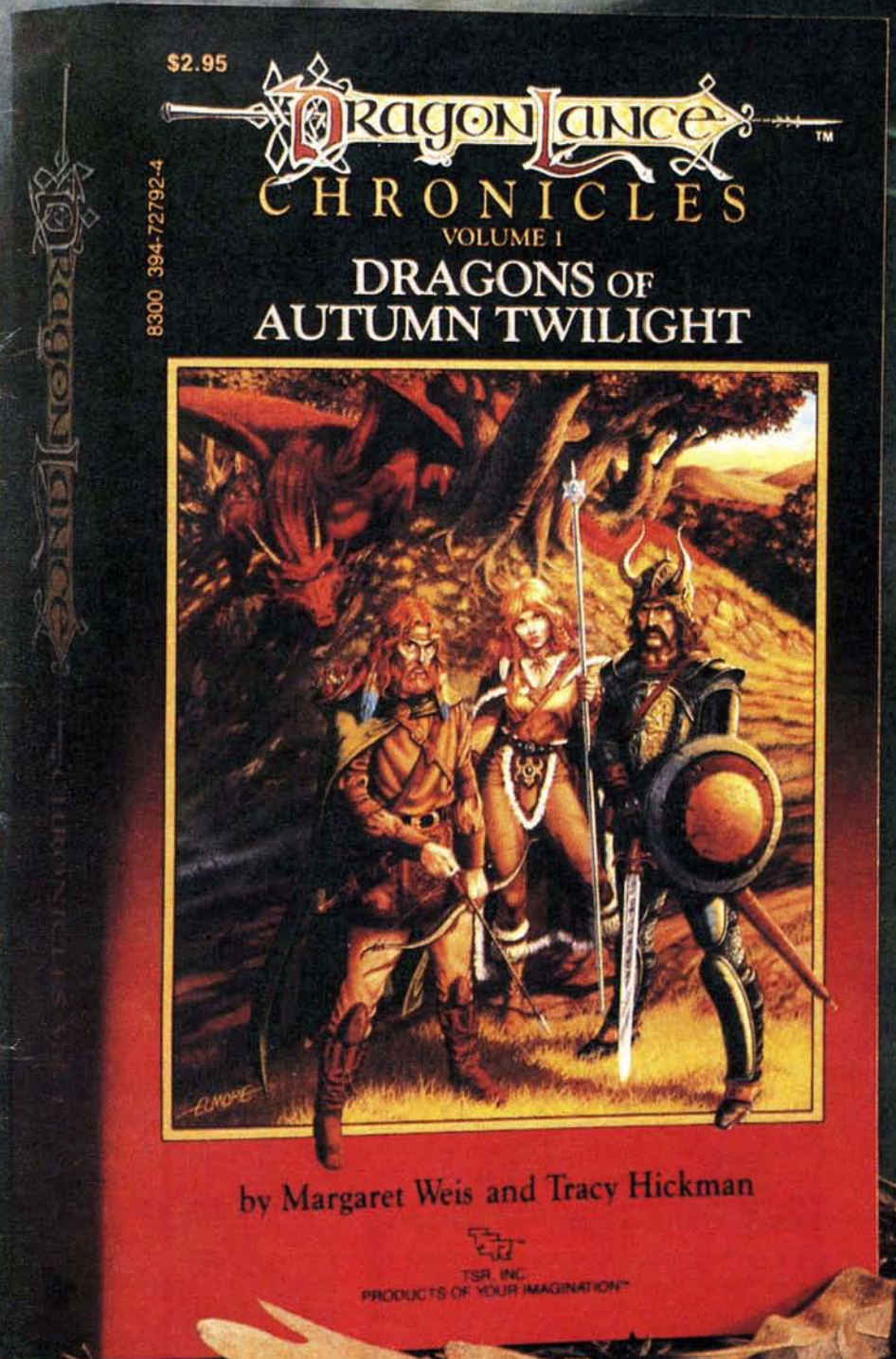

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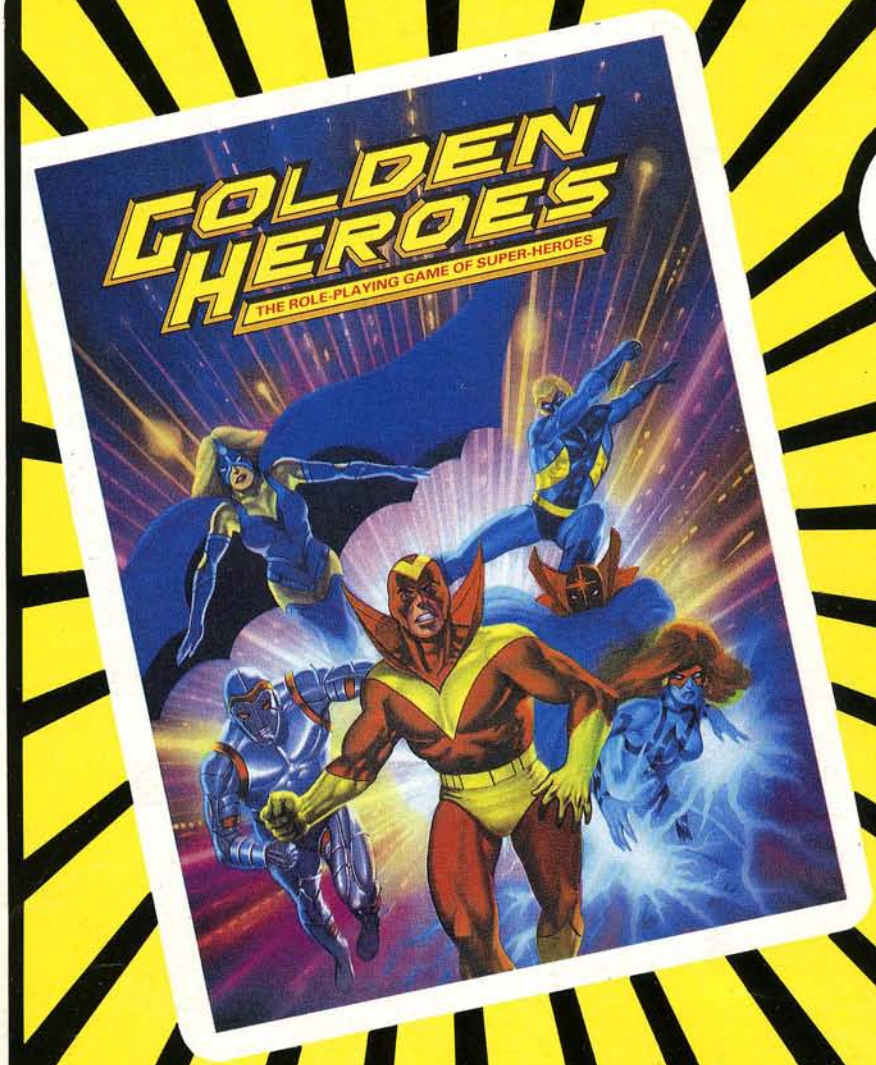

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